

Desolate Era

(莽荒纪)

Book 16

The Nihilum Zone

I Eat Tomatoes

(我吃西红柿)

Story Description:

Fate had never been kind to Ji Ning. Wracked by illnesses and infirm his entire life on Earth, Ning knew early on that he would die as a teenager. What he didn't know was that there really was such a thing as life after death, and that the multiverse was a far larger place than he thought. A lucky twist of fate (one of the few in Ning's life) meant that Ning was reborn into a world of Immortals and monsters, of Ki Refiners and powerful Fiendgods, a world where Dynasties lasted for millions of years. A world which is both greater...and yet also smaller...than he ever could imagine. He would have the opportunity to join them, and in this life, Ning swore to himself, he would never let himself be weak again! The Era he was born into was a Desolate one, but Ning would make it his era.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Chapter 1: You Did Not Sin

“Senior apprentice-brother!”

Mu Northson was watching from within the ten thousand kilometer formation region, wracked by agony and self-hatred for being unable to help Ji Ning. Little Qing and Uncle White’s faces both changed dramatically as well.

Both of them could tell that there had just been a spatial teleportation of some sort!

“I can no longer sense Master’s location,” Little Qing said frantically. “I can’t even get the vaguest sense of the direction he is in. Master is no longer in the world of the Grand Xia; he’s gone to an extremely distant place.”

“I can’t sense him either,” Uncle White said, trying to attentively sense Ning’s location.

“It’s all my fault. It’s all because of me, a useless piece of trash. I shouldn’t have been in such a rush to take revenge. I shouldn’t have...” Northson was filled with utter regret.

It had been Ning who had rescued him and Yu Xia’s soul from the Eastwoods mountain range...but afterwards, when the Youngflame clan’s Celestial Immortals had ambushed Ning, Yu Xia’s soul had been completely destroyed. Although he had felt utter hatred for the Youngflame clan, in truth, Northson did feel a bit of resentment towards Ning as well in his heart.

However...given Ning’s great kindness towards him, and given that they were lifelong friends to begin with, he had buried that resentment deep within his heart.

But in this moment...

When he saw the descent of the karmic sinflames, as well as the agonized look on the face of Ning as he was being burnt by the sinflames...Northson felt incomparable guilt in his heart. “If I hadn’t kept

clamoring on and on about revenge, senior apprentice-brother wouldn't have been in such a rush. He would've kept on waiting, waiting until he grew even more powerful...and then, he would've completely wiped out the entire Youngflame clan. This is all due to my own impatience."

"Say no more." Uncle White growled, "The Youngflame clan's Celestial Immortals are already flying towards us. Let's hurry up and leave. Little Qing, we need a Greater Teleportation."

"Alright."

Little Qing tamped down the grief and pain she felt, immediately waving her hand and bringing along Uncle White and Northson into a Greater Teleportation.

Whoosh!

They disappeared into thin air, having returned to Swallow Mountain.

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The seven Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan were indeed flying straight towards the formation area. With but a single void blink, they arrived directly outside of the formation. However...as soon as they arrived, Little Qing, Uncle White, and Northson departed. Little Qing and the other two knew quite well that there was no way they could possibly deal with these Celestial Immortals. They were far too weak; they could only suppress their hatred for now. If Ning had truly died...they would train hard so that in the future, they would be able to take revenge for him.

"They ran quite fast," Celestial Immortal Arcanum sneered.

"They were weak to begin with; they only dared to attack this place because of Ji Ning. Now that he's dead, why wouldn't they flee?" Celestial Immortal Blackrain said coldly.

The nearby Infatuation shook his head. "Blackrain, Ji Ning isn't dead yet."

"When karmic sinflames descend, they shall bring multiple rounds of

punishment. I refuse to believe he won't die," Celestial Immortal Blackrain said. "In addition, Master also used his Worldhold Pagoda; he must have sent Ji Ning to one of the danger zones within the void beyond the Three Realms. Some of those danger zones are enough to cause even True Immortals or Empyrean Gods to perish, much less a little brat that hasn't even overcome his Celestial Tribulation."

The nearby horned, golden-robed man turned his head to look at the distant Old Demon Windraiser, still wracked by indescribable pain. He spoke out and said, "If Windraiser is able to withstand this tribulation of karmic sinflames...I shall personally escort him to the Ten Yama-Kings of Hell. When he is reborn, he absolutely must be reborn into our Youngflame clan. No expenses will be spared in training him."

"Right."

"Of course."

All of them nodded.

This was no joke. If someone was able to overcome karmic sinflames, they would undergo an utterly astounding transformation, and their Dao-hearts would become truly remarkable in strength. Although they would lose their memories of their former lives upon being reborn...such a soul would still have enormous potential in the new life. Upon regaining one's previous memories...one would have an extremely good chance of overcoming the Celestial Tribulation.

"Let's see if he can overcome the karmic sinflames," the horned, golden-robed man said with a sigh. "Every single person who is capable of overcoming karmic sinflames is an extremely remarkable person. Even amongst Celestial Immortals, such individuals are amongst the very top."

There were very few, even amongst Celestial Immortals, who could withstand the power of karmic sinflames!

In truth, it was very hard for someone to tell how strong another person's Dao-heart was. Even someone as powerful as Celestial Immortal Infatuation wouldn't dare claim for certain that he was able to withstand karmic sinflames! Thus...Celestial Immortals were generally quite

cautious. Only if there was no other choice would they allow themselves to act in a way that would cause karmic sinflames to swirl around their bodies. The descent of karmic sinflames was truly terrifying...but once one overcame it, one's power would generally skyrocket!

In the Three Realms...every single person who overcame karmic sinflames would end up being an incredible figure.

For example, Ning's senior apprentice-brother, Empyrean God Silvermoon, was a person who had karmic sinflames constantly swirling around him. Silvermoon, however, completely ignored them...proof that he truly was an utter demon.

The world of the Grand Xia. The western seas. The Seamless Gate's gathering spot.

The enormous mirror had displayed all the scenes of the battle that had just occurred in the Oldjade mountain range. The escape and wild assault of nine hundred-plus Fiendgods...the pursuit of the Godslayer Gods... Ning's sudden, unexpected explosion of power that had resulted in the slaying of two Celestial Immortals...Old Demon Windraiser, a Loose Immortal of the Youngflame clan, attacking 'suicidally'...the descent of karmic sinflames...Ning being burnt by karmic sinflames...Ning bent teleported away by the Worldhold Pagoda...

"Exciting. How very exciting." Celestial Immortal Blackheaven sighed repeatedly in praise. "That Windraiser...he really is both decisive and vicious. He was able to come up with this plan and settle on it in such a short period of time...and those who died were all his own clansmen! Ten billion of his clansmen died, just like that...his heart truly is vicious and merciless. He truly does have the temperament necessary for a demon."

"You are actually praising him? You are actually praising such a despicable, contemptible little man?" Violetgrass frowned.

"Violetgrass, little girl, you are wrong; although you are a Celestial Immortal, in terms of Dao-hearts, you are probably inferior to that Windraiser." Celestial Immortal Blackheaven shook his head. "As far as craftiness...you are even more inferior to him. This is one of the reasons

why the Gatemaster has never let you truly command your own forces; there are far, far too many things you need to see and experience first.”

“So I’m inferior to him?” Violetgrass was angry.

“How many setbacks have you encountered in life?” Celestial Immortal Blackheaven shook his head. “Although we are Celestial Immortals who hold Loose Immortals in contempt, and although indeed 99% of Loose Immortals are not worthy of us paying attention to...amongst the countless Loose Immortals who are alive, there are some who have lived for over a million years. This type of Loose Immortal has suffered repeated assaults from the Three Calamities, Nine Tribulations. Their many experiences with the demonheart tribulation has caused their Dao-hearts to become incomparably mighty.”

“You, by comparison, became a Celestial Immortal early on. Although you’ve lived longer than them...how many actual tribulations have you undergone? Despite your talent and the fact that you have superior comprehension abilities...you’ve suffered far too few setbacks. Your Dao-heart truly might be inferior to theirs. Look – even though he’s being burned by karmic sinflames, he’s still able to maintain enough presence of mind to carry on a conversation with the Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan. Would you dare make the claim that you could do the same?”

Violetgrass was startled.

Even monsters like Ji Ning were just barely able to maintain a modicum of consciousness when being assaulted by karmic sinflames. Old Demon Windraiser, however, was clear-minded enough to carry on a conversation. He clearly was far superior.

“The lives of ten billion commoners, in exchange for the life of a peerless, monstrous genius like Ji Ning...worth it.” Violetgrass suddenly said, “Old bastard, tell me; can this sort of method be used against Celestial Immortals?”

“Are you suicidal?” Celestial Immortal Blackheaven shook his head. “As the person who gave the order...you, the mastermind, will also incur

enormous sin. Ten billion mortal lives! If you are lucky, you'll have a bloody aura of sin that will surround you and stretch out to many hundreds of meters; if you aren't lucky, you'll probably see karmic sinflames descend right away as well! As for the person you sent out to actually do it...that person will definitely suffer the descent of karmic sinflames. Such an action is utter suicide."

"In addition...perhaps ordinary Celestial Immortals are unable to withstand karmic sinflames, but the truly powerful Celestial Immortals are generally able to do so. As for True Immortals or Empyrean Gods...they are the experts of the Three Realms! All of them are capable of withstanding karmic sinflames. Don't even ask about Daofathers." Celestial Immortal Blackheaven sighed. "Thus...this sort of method really isn't worth it."

"Anyhow. This Ji Ning is being burned by karmic sinflames, and has also been teleported by Youngflame Freak to one of the danger zones in the void beyond the Three Realms. There's nothing for me to do here. Time for me to go." Celestial Immortal Blackheaven rose to his feet, still carrying a gourd of Immortal nectar. Drinking and whistling, he began to walk away.

"Old bastard, this one doesn't count. You still owe me two favors," Violetgrass called after him.

"Don't worry. I'm not as shameless as you." Celestial Immortal Blackheaven's voice echoed out within the palace, but he himself had disappeared.

Violetgrass turned to stare back at the mirror, still depicting events within the Oldjade mountain range. She mumbled to herself, "So he was actually sent into a danger zone, just like that. I didn't even have anything to do with it. Still...that's a good thing for me."

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Within the ancient pagoda tower.

All seven of the Celestial Immortals, including the Youngflame Ancestor, were gathered here. Not too far away was Old Demon

Windraiser, who was seated in the lotus position. However, his body was clearly trembling slightly. The karmic sinflames around him were beginning to vanish; clearly, the trials brought by the karmic sinflames were nearing their end.

“This is already the seventh day. Windraiser is still holding on.” Celestial Immortal Arcanum’s narrow eyes were filled with eagerness.

“The longer it goes on, the more dangerous it becomes. The seventh day is the final day. If he is able to withstand this day...he’ll survive. But if he doesn’t...” The Youngflame Ancestor shook his head. Suddenly, however, his face changed as he turned to stare at Old Demon Windraiser.

Old Demon Windraiser’s aura was beginning to gradually weaken.

This was the aura of his soul weakening in strength.

“What’s going on?”

“Why is his aura weakening?”

Everyone was extremely worried.

They knew very little about karmic sinflames; all they knew was that the karmic sinflames brought a tribulation that lasted for seven days, and that the final stages were the most terrifying of all! Once one made it past the seven day mark, the karmic sinflames would vanish; one would only be able to detect them through coresense or divine sense, and not with the naked eye. However...although invisible, the karmic sinflames would always be present. The constant swirl of karmic sinflames on one’s body would feel like being eternally roasted in the pits of hell.

“His heart...his heart is weakening,” the Youngflame Ancestor said. “When his heart weakens, his aura weakens as well. Once his heart dies... then his soul will instantly be burnt to ash. This is why karmic sinflames are so terrifying! The initial ‘Agony’ phase from when the karmic sinflames first descend merely cause brute-force pain. Those with powerful Dao-hearts, however, are often able to overcome this phase. The latter parts have a softer approach which will slowly cause pain and regret to seep into one’s heart...causing the tormented person’s heart to

slowly wither and die. It is akin to suicide!”

Old Demon Windraiser’s aura was indeed growing weaker and weaker.

The seven Celestial Immortals watched with incomparable nervousness.

Six more hours passed.

His aura was completely extinguished.

BOOM!

After his aura had completely disappeared for just a few seconds...it suddenly began to increase rapidly in power. Finally, Old Demon Windraiser opened his eyes.

“I survived.”

Old Demon Windraiser said in a low voice, “What terrifying ‘karmic sinflames’ indeed! They were far more powerful than the Three Calamities, Nine Tribulations that one experiences at the million year mark. I actually survived...but I really don’t want to experience that again. I really do not.” A deep, haunted look was in Old Demon Windraiser’s eyes.

“Windraiser,” the Youngflame Ancestor called out.

Windraiser hurriedly came to his senses.

“Ancestor.” Windraiser said hurriedly, “Patriarchs, I, Windraiser, condemned ten billion members of our clan to death. My sin...”

“Enough. You did not sin; in fact, you rendered major merits,” the Youngflame Ancestor said with a loud laugh. “It was just ten billion mortals, after all. We can bring a few billion mortals over from our other two headquarters, and in a few more decades this place shall be flourishing once more. The reason why we were able to deal with Ji Ning this time was you; you ignored your own well-being and willingly endured karmic sinflames to deal him a fierce blow. You did very well!”

Old Demon Windraiser’s voice was still very low. “Ancestor, I’ve incurred far, far too many sins. A storm is coming to the Three Realms.

Me being alive will only result in a hugely negative influence upon the Youngflame clan. I'm preparing to kill myself, then head to the Netherworld."

"Yes." The Ancestor nodded. "It is for the best. Given how many sins you have incurred...after you die and go to the Netherworld, you will be punished in the deepest depths of hell and tormented in countless unspeakable ways. After you are finally allowed to be reborn...I will definitely bring you back into the Youngflame clan. In the past, dealing with matters in the Netherworld Kingdom might be a bit troublesome, but now that Daofather Crimsonbright has re-established a minor cycle of reincarnation, all ten of his Yama-Kings of Hell will assuredly give me some face. I will arrange everything necessary for you."

"Yes." Old Demon Windraiser said respectfully, "Then...I'll leave now."

Old Demon Windraiser didn't hesitate at all.

Whoosh!

His golden lotus spirit voluntarily dissipated, and a human-shaped soul, wreathed by karmic sinflames, flew straight towards the minor cycle of reincarnation.

Swoosh! The Youngflame Ancestor immediately headed towards the minor cycle of reincarnation as well.

Chapter 2: Red Dust Tribulations

[Note – Red dust is an allegorical Buddhist term that refers to worldly affairs, attachments, and desires. It is often said that in order to achieve Buddhahood, one has to be able to ‘see past the red dust’. ‘Women of the red dust’ is also a phrase that is specifically used to refer to courtesans.]

Stillwater Commandery. Swallow Mountain. Serpentwing Lake.
Brightheart Island.

Uncle White, in human form, was seated within a pavilion, moodily drinking wine by himself. Mu Northson was seated as well, leaning against the pavilion railings with his eyes shut. As for Little Qing, she was hugging her knees, seated quietly within a corner of the pavilion.

They were all completely silent.

A long time later...

“Should we tell Autumn Leaf?” Little Qing suddenly said.

“We should not.” Uncle White sighed. “In Autumn Leaf’s heart, my son Ning is...ugh. She wouldn’t be to take the blow. Let’s wait for now. We can tell her that Ning is in secluded meditation.”

“Are we supposed to just keep hiding this from them?” Little Qing asked.

“We can sense that my son Ning is still alive,” Uncle White said. “As long as he is still alive...let’s keep things hidden from Autumn Leaf, as well as all of the Ji clansmen.”

Little Qing nodded gently as well, then said, “Then about about Ji Ning’s master, Immortal Diancai?”

“Diancai...”

Uncle White hesitated a moment, then said, “Let’s wait. The most terrifying punishment brought by karmic sinflames will arrive on the seventh day. As long as he survives the seventh day, he will have survived the karmic sinflames. If he doesn’t come back after seven days...that

means he truly is trapped in some mysterious danger zone located outside the world of the Grand Xia...at which point, we will notify Immortal Diancai.”

“Alright.” Little Qing nodded.

They fell silent once more.

None of them had anything to say. They just waited, quietly.

Seven days...

These seven days posed a huge tribulation for Ning. If he didn't die within these seven days and withstood the karmic sinflames...he would have overcome this tribulation. However, they didn't have any idea as to where the Youngflame clan had teleported him to...but given the amount of hatred they felt towards him, they must have sent him to a truly terrifying place.

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The banks of a vast, roaring river. There was an azure-robed man seated in the lotus position here. He wielded an Immortal sword in his hands, but the Immortal sword actually had a fishing line hanging down from it; clearly, he was using it to fish.

Whoosh.

From high up in the skies, a handsome-looking youth came flying over atop a cloud. He landed on the ground, then bowed respectfully. “My respects to you, Patriarch Lu. Per the Xia Emperor's orders, this junior has come to send you a message.” A scroll appeared before him, which he respectfully offered with both hands.

“A letter? The Xia Emperor?” Lu Dongbin turned his head to look. He waved his hand, and the scroll flew straight to him. He tapped on it gently, and the scroll unfurled on its own.

Lu Dongbin read through it carefully. His face changed slightly.

“Understood. You can leave now,” Lu Dongbin said calmly.

“Yes.” The handsome youth departed gracefully.

Lu Dongbin, however, began to frown. “Karmic sinflames descended? The Youngflame clan actually used a method like this? Although Ji Ning is indeed talented, he’s trained for less than a century. Will he be able to survive?” Lu Dongbin turned his head to look towards the distance. A golden rune suddenly appeared in his pupils, and instantly his gaze was able to pierce through space, seeing an island that was ten million kilometers away.

At the quiet, secluded island, there was a black-robed maiden seated in the lotus position on a beach.

“This disciple of mine...she keeps her thoughts and secrets guarded quite tightly,” Lu Dongbin mused softly to himself. “That killing intent within her heart...it is even more terrifying than I had predicted it to be. In addition, at the Grand Xia Dynasty, she was hiding her true power the entire time. But...when I went to find Judge Cui to inspect her past lives, everything seemed normal. Although in her previous life, she was a powerful, fiendish figure, a demon whose power was comparable to a Loose Immortal who had lived for a million years...for a person to be powerful in a previous life is a good thing. There’s no need to hide it. When she awakened her memories during the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, given how powerful she was in her previous life...she absolutely could’ve made it to the top three, and perhaps she could’ve even become champion.”

Originally, Lu Dongbin had deeply desired to take on Ji Ning as his disciple, because Ji Ning truly was born to be a Sword Immortal. In addition, he had vaguely sensed some of Ning’s other extraordinary attributes.

As for Yu Wei...

Lu Dongbin had originally felt that Yu Wei was hiding even more secrets. However, he wasn’t certain at first; after taking her on as his disciple and interacting with her for a long period of time, he had naturally been able to discover many flaws in Yu Wei’s façade. In the end, Yu Wei had been forced to admit it: “Master, I was indeed hiding my true strength. This was because I don’t wish for others to know about my past

life. I don't want others to know that in my past life, I was such a vile, demonic figure. I'm tired...so tired. I want this life to be a bit more relaxed."

Yu Wei clearly knew very well that Lu Dongbin, given his status, could easily investigate her past lives. She no longer maintained her façade before him.

"Was it really just because she wishes for this life to be a bit more ordinary and relaxed?" Lu Dongbin was at such a high level of enlightenment that he was extremely close to the level of the Daofathers! He could vaguely make out the tides and portents of destiny...and he always felt that Yu Wei wasn't as simple a figure as she made herself to be.

However, he had investigated the Book of Life and Death.

Yu Wei hadn't lied to him.

Could it be that he was wrong?

"Right now, Yu Wei needs to keep her heart steady and calm. When the time is right, the Celestial Tribulation shall come," Lu Dongbin mused to himself. "The Celestial Tribulation is incomparably dangerous; in her past life, she failed to overcome it. In this life, it shall be extremely dangerous as well! I can sense that her feelings towards Ji Ning are genuine. If he truly is trapped in a danger zone...if I tell her, her demonheart tribulation will probably become even more terrifying."

"For now, I won't tell her. After she overcomes her tribulation, I'll tell her."

Lu Dongbin continued to ponder pensively.

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Yu Wei sat there in the lotus position at the beach. The seas and the skies were the same color, giving an impression of an infinitely vast firmament. Her heart was extremely calm right now.

She was nurturing her Dao-heart.

She was quietly preparing...

Based on what Patriarch Lu had said, once she overcame her tribulation and became a Celestial Immortal, she would leave his tutelage.

“Junior apprentice-brother, I’ll undergo my tribulation soon. Afterwards, I’ll go seek you out right away.” A hint of a smile played at the corner of Yu Wei’s mouth. Ji Ning was the warmest memory in her heart; when Ji Ning had returned to the Grand Xia, Patriarch Lu had naturally informed her once he had learned of this. However, Yu Wei didn’t have any idea that Ji Ning was currently trapped in a danger zone.

The term ‘Three Realms’ referred to the Heaven Realm, the Netherworld Kingdom, and the Mortal Realm.

The Heaven Realm and the Netherworld Kingdom were extremely vast, while the three thousand major worlds and trillion minor worlds of the Mortal Realm were as countless as the stars of the Milky Way. And beyond all of these realms...there was the vast, limitless Void, an empty region that was even greater than the Three Realms themselves. Within the Void were two supreme stars, the Solar Star and the Lunar Star, as well as many other stars.

Within the infinite Void, there were countless danger zones, including some which would cause even True Immortals and Empyrean Gods to perish. In fact, there were some places which even True Gods and Daofathers would hesitate to venture into, preferring to simply watch them from a distance.

The three thousand major worlds and trillion minor worlds were like tiny little islands or reefs located within the infinite Void. The three thousand major worlds were like large islands, while the trillion minor worlds were reefs. At the very center of the three thousand islands and trillion reefs, there was an enormous ‘continent’ located within the infinite void.

This ‘continent’ was countless times greater than any of the major worlds. There, space and time clashed and twisted against each other...

It truly was a terrifying place. And at the places where the chaotic

continent and the empty Void intersected, there were constant waves of void-ripples that spread out.

Rumble...

It was much like how, on a mortal world, where the waters of the ocean met the land, enormous oceanic waves would slam down against the land.

The waves of Void slammed repeatedly against the margins of the vast, chaotic continent...and the constant collisions formed a region of utter annihilation. The Nihilum Zone!

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The Nihilum Zome.

Rumble...

A streak of white light suddenly flashed by, transporting a youth to this location.

“AAAARGH!”

Pain.

Pain like he had never experienced before. For mortals, once their level of pain reached a certain threshold, they could actually die from it. As for Immortal cultivators...the terrifying agony brought by the first round of punishments from the karmic sinflames was an agony that was applied directly to their souls. There was no escape, nowhere to hide. The pain of it vastly outstripped the pain of one's soul being torn apart.

There was a limit to how much pain the body and the soul could take.

The amount of pain the heart could suffer, however, was limitless.

Once the Dao-heart collapsed due to agony, the soul would quickly burnt to ash.

“No. No...” Ning was struggling to stay alive. He was able to remain just barely conscious, but that hint of consciousness was simply too weak; he wasn't even able to pay any attention to his surroundings.

Finally, the increasing amount of pain reached a peak, a plateau.

Instantly...the pain vanished.

Ning was rather stunned. To go from a peak of pain to no pain at all... this, too, caused Ning's Dao-heart to tremble.

"This place is..." Ning finally managed to look at his surroundings.

Blackness surrounded him.

Aided by the incomparably dim wisps of light sent forth by the distant Solar Star, Ning was able to just barely see that the darkness around him seemed to surge and ebb like flows of water. The void waves...they stretched off into infinity, while Ning was nothing more than a tiny little speck in the midst of a vast, endless void sea.

Rumble...a void wave came sweeping over. Ning felt his entire body tremble; the terrifying power of the wave vastly surpassed the combined power of all the Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan.

Immediately afterwards...

Ning's entire world went dark.

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"Young master." An utterly ravishing beauty, dressed in thin, gauzy clothes, was looking straight towards Ning. She gently loosened her clothes, allowing them to slide downwards, half-revealing her body. She then gently licked at one of her fingertips, then used that finger to flick at her her shoulders, causing her clothes to slip down even further. Instantly, her clothes slipped all the way down, revealing her completely bare body. She walked over slowly, her large, limpid eyes staring longingly towards Ning. "Young master, I want it..."

This woman's appearance was a mixture of the best aspects of Cloudjade, Autumn Leaf, Yu Wei, and Ninelotus' appearances.

However, she was even more alluring and even more enchanting; she completely aroused Ning's desire.

"F*ck off."

Ning remained clear-minded; he knew that this was an illusion created

by the descent of the karmic sinflames. This was the second tribulation brought by the sinflames; the 'lust tribulation' of the 'red dust tribulations'. Once one became enmeshed into the illusions, one would truly die. He immediately struck out with his arm, intending to smash the woman before him into dust.

However...Ning suddenly realized that his body had become extremely weak. When his palm struck out, it only carried the amount of power an ordinary mortal would have. The nude beauty stretched her own hand out, immediately catching Ning's arm. She whispered softly, "Are you shy?" She immediately pressed Ning down to the ground...

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When gripped by the throes of lust, one's Dao-heart could indeed be shaken. Ning was completely unable to fight back; all he could do was strive to maintain his Dao-heart, strive to resist what was happening.

"It seems this humble one's services weren't enough. However...this humble one has six sisters who are even better." The woman lying across Ning's chest whispered gently into his ears. Instantly, six more beauties appeared in the distance. Each had their own unique charms; truly, beauties like these were almost impossible to encounter the real world. In addition, each were exactly the type of woman which Ning liked the most, and also the type of woman that stirred his lust the most.

He knew that this was all just part of the 'lust tribulation'.

But...how could the lust tribulation be so easily overcome? It was much like how, in real life, many people knew that drugs were harmful, but upon having tasted it once, they would never be able to abstain from them ever again. By the same principle...a person might know that his soul would be destroyed if he succumbed to lust, but succumbing to lust was a very basic part of human nature. There was no way for a person to completely rid himself of lust; all a person could do was suppress it. However...when one was unable to resist, one would still be repeatedly enticed and aroused by lust.

"Powdered skeletons. All of them are nothing more than skeletons; they

are transformed toads that have pustules on their skin. All of them have intentionally transformed into this appearance to deceive me.” Ning repeatedly mumbled these words to himself, continuously and forcibly suppressing his own desires.

Chapter 3: Iceheart

Although he did his best to visualize these seven beauties as skeletons, or as transformed toads and other abominations...deep in his heart, Ji Ning knew that they weren't toads. They were part of the 'red dust tribulation' which the karmic sinflames had brought; they were created from his own heart, and they weren't actually disgusting. This caused Ning to unconsciously be drawn further and further into lust.

"Hold, hold, hold..." Ning was repeatedly suppressing his own lusts.

But as time flowed on, the amount of lust he felt was increasing nonstop.

"Wait."

Ning suddenly came to his senses. He thought about a legend he had read about on Earth, a legend about Yu the Great taming the floods. "Rather than dam it all up, he spread it out in channels. How can lust possibly be forcibly suppressed? The red dust tribulation...the red dust tribulation...according to the records of Mount Innerheart, in order to overcome a red dust tribulation, one has to both enter the red dust as well as emerge from the red dust." 1

"But if I allow myself to enter the red dust...if I succumb to it, what then?"

"What should I do?"

All sorts of thoughts began to war with each other in Ning's heart.

The more one knew, the harder it was to deal with the red dust tribulation. In addition...'knowing' was one thing, being able to actually 'do' was another thing.

"No matter what..."

"My heart cannot succumb."

"This is nothing more than my baptism through the red dust."

Ning didn't dare to relax his vigilance in the slightest.

Actually...Ning had actually made the correct decision. This was because ordinary cultivators, when being tested by a red dust tribulation, would generally be able to first allow themselves to succumb for a long period of time. Afterwards, when the day came for them to suddenly be enlightened and emerge from the red dust, their Dao-hearts would naturally be strengthened tremendously. Ning's situation, however, was different! His 'red dust tribulation' came from the descent of karmic sinflames; he absolutely couldn't allow himself to succumb to them at all.

Time flowed on.

Lust. Gluttony. Rage. Avarice. Love. Hate...

Within the red dust tribulation, all the desires one could feel when trapped within the mortal world, the world of red dust, would be amplified to an extreme.

Lust – The most soul-stirring beautiful women would appear.

Gluttony – Unimaginably delicious delicacies, delicacies that would cause your soul to quiver.

Rage – All sorts of arguments, jealousies, disputes...as well as the joy and jubilation that came after violent conquest.

Love – Parental love, spousal love, romantic love, brotherly love, master-disciple love...the word 'love' truly did involve many things that people were willing to die for.

Hate – Towering, earth-shattering hatred and resentment that filled every inch of one's heart. Hatred that not even the waters of the four seas could wash away...boundless hatred and a desire to kill one's foes...

.....

At first, Ning did his best to suppress all of the desires of the red dust, trying to push them away from him. This, however, caused Ning's heart to feel increasingly tired. But slowly...Ning began to understand.

"Let these enticements come as they may. My heart abides."

"This...this is nothing more but a mortal, fleshly coil."

Ning completely separated the innermost part of his heart from the outside world.

He let his lust soar to the skies. He let himself feel excitement, rage, hatred, joy, disappointment, grief, happiness...Ning no longer suppressed any of it, allowing the feelings to invade every part of his entire body. Ning's heart, however, transcended it all. It was like a bystander, simply watching everything and keeping an eye on everything.

"One's true heart...one's fleshly body...?" Ning slowly began to understand...and he thought of [Houyi's Archery].

The reason why [Houyi's Archery] was able to rank amongst the top ten divine abilities of the universe and was considered comparable to the [Starseizing Hand], but the actual application of it was even more complicated. It had higher requirements with regards to skill, it required extremely good bows and arrows...and it only allowed for very, very few shots. However...its power was truly ridiculous as well.

At the peak of its power, [Houyi's Archery] was even more terrifying than the [Starseizing Hand] at its peak! Even Houyi, a divine archer of the Primordial Era, would only be able to shoot out ten or so arrows at maximum power before growing exhausted. The power of those arrows, however, was truly terrifying.

In addition, the application of divine power was just one part of [Houyi's Archery]. The true reason why it was dominant throughout the Three Realms and became acknowledged as the number one archery technique was thanks to...heartforce!

Heartforce was a source of power that was invisible, formless, but incomparably mysterious and miraculous.

This was a force that was completely outside the types of power which Immortals and Fiendgods could normally control. Elemental ki, Immortal power, and divine power were all visible to the naked eye...but heartforce was invisible. In fact, unless one was using it to support something like archery, heartforce alone was completely unable to injure anyone.

However, it was precisely this energy, 'heartforce', which allowed divine

archers to become truly terrifying figures. Houyi was the most powerful of the divine archers, and the [Houyi's Archery] technique which he developed was able to strengthen the application of heartforce to a truly frightening level. This was why this technique was such an unearthly, powerful one.

Heartforce, invisible and formless...

And yet, it allowed one to reach astonishing levels of power. In the Primordial World, not even True Gods or Daofathers would willingly become enemies with Houyi. He was truly an incomparably terrifying man amongst the True Gods and Daofathers, a legendary divine archer even in an age of legends.

[Houyi's Archery] clearly differentiated heartforce into multiple levels.

The first level of heartforce could be considered the 'basic' level, the level which Ning had currently reached. If one could truly apply heartforce to one's arrows and cause one's arrows to be able to strike unerringly at a distance of ten thousand kilometers, one had reached the basic level.

Ning had spent many years training archery painstakingly at Mount Innerheart before reaching the basic level. Generally speaking, upon reaching the basic level, one could already be considered as having entered the ranks of the 'divine archers' and be viewed as one of them, having reached a level that was as far above the other archers of the Three Realms as the heavens were above the earth. If one didn't understand heartforce, one would never be able to become a true 'divine archery'. Only by understanding heartforce could one's archery become truly terrifying.

The second level of heartforce was known as 'iceheart'!

Iceheart...

This meant that one's inner heart had completely transcended the body. It would no longer be shaken or bedazzled by foreign influences. The waters of one's inner heart would have frozen into a cube of ice; there would no longer be any ripples within it! Once one's heart reached this

level, one's 'heartforce' would begin to qualitatively evolve and also increase in power tremendously.

.....

"So, under the pressure of the sinflames of karma...I had unknowingly reached the level of 'iceheart', improving my heartforce." Ning felt a calm joy in his heart. "It truly is as others have said; so long as one can survive the descent of karmic sinflames, one's Dao-heart will undergo a qualitative change, and one will increase in power dramatically."

The descent of karmic sinflames was a portent for three great tribulations, each more powerful than the last.

Ning had just experienced the second round of tribulations, the 'red dust tribulations', resulting in him reaching the iceheart level of heartforce. From this, one could see that although karmic sinflames truly did represent a tremendous tribulation...disaster and fortune came in a pair. If one survived this tribulation, one would reap certain rewards.

However, very few Immortal cultivators would willingly allow karmic sinflames to surround them. After all, once they did, even if one did survive the three rounds of karmic tribulations, in the future, the karmic sinflames would perpetually blaze around their bodies. One would constantly suffer from the agony of being burnt by karmic sinflames! Although the pain wouldn't be as agonizing as during the three rounds of tribulations, to be constantly burnt alive...unless it was absolutely necessary, who would willingly endure such a thing?

In addition, it was extremely difficult for one to lower one's level of sin by enough to drop back down to the level of being surrounded by a 'bloody aura of sin'.

Karmic virtue, karmic sin. It was hard to gain karmic virtue, but karmic sin came with ease!

Killing mortals was a tremendous sin; doing so would allow one to effortlessly accrue an enormous amount of sin...

But it was far, far harder to acquire karmic virtue. For example, after

Ning had killed that evil Patriarch and many evil Diremonsters that had been surrounded by the bloody light of sin, and after when he had taken on a disciple who had whole-heartedly devoted herself to him, he had only just barely been able to upgrade his level of karmic virtue to being surrounded by golden karmic light. The range of his aura of golden karmic light had been extremely small as well! To reach the legendary level of karmic virtue where one's body would be surrounded by a rainbow of light would be unfathomably more difficult!

And in fact...sometimes, one might do evil, even with the best of intentions. Karmic virtue was something which even figures as possible as True Gods or Daofathers were unable to completely understand the rules of. Although saving figures of karmic virtue and killing sinners did seem to be virtuous acts, and although ninety-nine out of a hundred such actions would result in an increase in karmic virtue...there would always be one who would instead be condemned as a sinner.

For one to go from the level of having karmic sinflames to having a bloody aura of sin was comparable in difficulty to increasing from having a golden aura of karmic virtue to a holy rainbow-colored aura.

Thus...once one became bathed in karmic sinflames, it was virtually guaranteed that one would never, ever be able to escape from them.

To be eternally burnt by karmic sinflames...who would be willing to suffer such a thing?

.....

“Is there anything else?”

For a time, Ning had transcended everything; it was as though he had been seated upon an imperial throne, as though he had unified the world, as though no one would disobey his orders.

But suddenly...everything in front of him disappeared.

The scene before him transformed. He now saw a very ordinary courtyard, within which was a woman who was carrying an infant. Another woman was next to her, teasing the infant. In the center of the

courtyard, there was a muscular man who was slicing animal meat.

“Eh?” Ning suddenly realized that he had become that infant.

“What’s going on?” When Ning realized that he had taken on the role of the infant, he was puzzled; during all of the previous tribulations, he had always remained in his own body.

But as time went on...Ning slowly began to understand.

He had become the infant. The infant slowly grew up, becoming a toddler. All the toddlers received the same type of tutelage within the clan...but given how young he was, how could he possibly not be restless? Only after even more time passed did he slowly begin to study hard. And at eight years of age...his father went out hunting in the mountains, never to return.

He began to grow up, because he was the only man in the family. Under the tutelage of his mother and his second matron, he began to work hard.

2

His mother and his second matron, in order to ensure that he would receive good tutelage within the clan, suffered countless hardships.

He swore an oath to himself...

He would definitely let his mother and his second mother live a good life.

“Luo Jun, at the age of sixteen, you were able to train to the peak of the Houtian level; you have quite a bit of potential. What you need to do now is experience life-and-death dangers. If you can break through to the Xiantian level...then the lives of your mother and your second matron will be much better.” A middle-aged man smiled at him. “At that time...you’ll truly become acknowledged as a member of the Youngflame clan.”

“Right.” The youth’s eyes were filled with desire.

However...Ning, whose soul was riding with the youth, felt increasingly worried and uneasy.

Just as the youth had finished a dangerous adventure and had returned

to his city, a green-haired Immortal had suddenly appeared in the skies above the city.

“Everyone in the city is to be evacuated,” the green-haired Immortal ordered, his voice echoing everywhere.

Within the courtyard, the youth and his two mothers both raised their heads to look. They felt puzzled and mystified; evacuated? How?

Whoosh.

Moments later, they could feel space twisting around them...and they then appeared in a different dimension.

“So many people?” The youth felt as though they were surrounded by an endless sea of people.

“Luo Jun, what...what’s going on?” His two mothers were both panicking.

“Don’t worry. This is a technique of Immortals,” the youth said confidently. “There are countless clansmen here; we’ll know what’s going on soon.”

Not too long later...

Whoosh.

They were once more teleported away. This time, even more people were here.

“This time...it must be when Old Demon Windraiser put everyone together?” Ning could vaguely sense what was going to happen, and he felt dread in his heart. After having spent more than ten years alongside the youth, Ning sympathized with him as he would for himself. He knew how honest and good this youth was...and he knew how deep the love was between this youth and his two mothers.

He already knew what was in the youth’s future. He didn’t wish to believe that this future would come true.

Rumble...

The dimension exploded.

*

1. Yu the Great, Da Yu, was a legendary Emperor and founder of the Xia Dynasty in Chinese history. According to legends, he 'tamed' the Yellow River and its constant flooding problems by creating a system of irrigation canals as well as dredging the riverbeds, allowing Chinese civilization to flourish along the Yellow River.
2. Second matron here, as a term, means his father married two different women; polygamy was legal in ancient China, and the children would refer to their father's wives in order of seniority as 'first matron', 'second matron', etc., with the birth mother being simply 'mother'.

Chapter 4: The Third Sinflame Tribulation

The dimension blew apart, reality shattering into tiny little pieces. The more powerful Immortal cultivators within the dimension roared with fury, seeking to charge out from within it.

“What’s going on?”

“Heavens above!”

“Abu!”

Countless mortals were completely dazed and confused. They watched as the world itself shattered...and they were completely unable to resist. They cried out in terror, in pain, in panic.

“Mother, second matron...no...no...” The youth was completely dazed. He watched as the two most important people in his life, his mother and his second matron, be ground apart as the walls of reality itself imploded.

The most important people in his life!

“Mother!”

“Second matron!”

The youth felt unbearable pain. He was filled with hatred and despair...and then, his consciousness went dark.

Ning’s soul was riding with the youth, and the emotions which the youth felt slammed into Ning as well. After riding with the youth for more than ten years, Ning had feelings for the two women as well. He viewed them almost as he would his own mother...and when they died, Ning was filled with boundless anger, regret, and...self-blame! He couldn’t help but blame himself for what had happened.

If...if I hadn’t shattered that Qiankun pearl...how wonderful it would have been...

“That poor child. Those poor mothers...” Ning’s heart had already reached the iceheart level, and so he was able to quickly suppress that thread of self-blame. He quickly and completely escaped from being in

the mindset of that youth.

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“Listen up! A foolish idiot like you isn’t worthy of my little sister.” A muscular, powerful man was standing on the prone body of a youth. The man was roaring angrily, “If you know what’s good for you, stay away in the future. Don’t you dare get close to my little sister again. Otherwise... next time I see you, things won’t end as easily as they have today. There are plenty of monsters in the deep mountains outside the city; if I were to throw you into the mountains, before a single night is over, you’ll have been completely devoured, leaving behind not even a bone.”

The muscular man gave two more kicks before turning and leaving.

Ning felt pain throughout his entire body. He rose to his feet, his face swollen and his forehead busted open.

“Am I now riding with this youth?” Ning mused to himself.

The youth turned, then hobbled with difficulty towards his own residence.

That night.

“Ji.” A maiden stealthily crept in. Upon seeing the appearance of the bedridden youth, she felt such pain that her tears came cascading down. “It’s all my fault. All my fault...”

“Yu Wei?!” Ning couldn’t help but feel shocked when he saw the maiden.

They looked too similar.

Far too similar! In fact, she looked utterly identical to his senior apprentice-sister, Yu Wei. But Ning quickly came to his senses; given that there were ten billion mortals within the Oldjade mountain range, it made sense that there was at least one maiden who looked almost identical to Yu Wei. In addition...after he gave her a closer look, he saw that this maiden appeared simpler and more guileless than Yu Wei; she didn’t have the transcendent aura possessed by an Immortal cultivator.

The maiden helped the youth bind his wounds, applying medicine to him. She had even brought over a meat soup for him to drink.

“We need to be even more careful in the future. We can’t let my big brother see us again, or any other members of my family,” the maiden said hurriedly.

“Believe me, Lotus...I’m definitely going to train to the Xiantian level, at which point I will openly woo you and wed you,” the youth said seriously.

“I know.” The maiden nodded gently.

.....

“You little punk...why don’t you take a good look at yourself? You really don’t know your own limits. You little bastard, you aren’t even a Xiantian lifeform! My little sister is so beautiful, she’s like an Immortal fairy who has descended to the mortal world; she’s one of the most beautiful women of the entire city of Eaststring. Plenty of people wish to wed my little sister.” The muscular man was roaring at him. “And you think you can dream of the same? I warned you last time...so don’t blame me for showing no mercy this time! Servants, tie him up and send him to the mountains. Feed him to the monsters!”

“Yes!” Two servants hurriedly assented.

The youth was pressed down against the ground, and his mouth was gagged with a cloth rag. His hands, arms, and entire body were quickly bound. He let out an unhappy groan, but the muscular man just stared at him coldly.

The youth was sent outside the city, deep into the mountains.

“Leave him here. Soon, he’ll be eaten up.” The two servants tossed him down to the ground.

The bound youth landed on the ground, covered with rocks and stones. One protruding stone stabbed deep into his chest. The youth immediately spat out a mouthful of blood, rolling around in agony on the ground.

“Am I going to die? Die here?”

The youth's heart was filled with terror.

Time passed on...

Rustle, rustle, rustle...

Sound rang out. The youth's heart clenched; had a monster just arrived? Forget about monsters; even ordinary animals would be able to effortlessly eat him right now.

"I'm absolutely sure that he's over here."

"You led us astray earlier. If you are wrong again, you can go die with that brat."

"Earlier, I led you the wrong way because it was dark. This time, there's no mistake at all."

Alongside the voices...

A muscular man appeared, leading two servants.

"Urrr. Urrr." The youth's mouth remained gagged; he was unable to speak, but he stared towards the three with surprise and anger.

The muscular man was so angry, he laughed. "You didn't die. Your luck really isn't bad! I really wonder what you did, you little brat, to make my little sister so besotted that she threatened suicide. Bring him back!"

Only later did the youth discover...

Lotus, upon learning that Ji had been sent to the deep mountains to be fed to monsters, had been stunned. And then...this girl who had always been innocent, pure, and obedient...went berserk. She threatened suicide: "If I don't see Ji before dawn, I'll go join him." The girl had pressed a sharp knife towards her heart. In the past, she had always been very obedient towards her peak Xiantian father, but this time, she wasn't willing to compromise at all. "Father, you might be able to take away my knife and tie me up, but if I want to die...you won't be able to stop me."

In the end...her strong, domineering father had bowed his head.

After this, Lotus' father and elder brother no longer tried to prevent the

two from being together. To the contrary, they began to train Ji, providing him with good cultivation techniques. Thanks to the help of Ji's father-in-law and brother-in-law, he truly did break through to become a Xiantian lifeform.

"What?" The youth used his Xiantian energy to probe Lotus' stomach. He revealed a look of delight. "This, this is..."

Lotus laughed as well.

"I'm going to be a father. Hahaha, I'm going to be a father. Wonderful! Ahahahaha..."

The youth was wildly overjoyed. Lotus, however, just quietly smiled.

"Lotus, I, Youngflame Ji, swear that I will definitely take good care of you and our son." The youth said excitedly, "My son, in the future, shall become a truly formidable figure. In fact, he'll be one of the most formidable figures of our entire Youngflame clan."

"Right." Lotus nodded gently as well.

.....

Ning's soul was riding with the youth. He had a very strange feeling in his heart. Lotus looked almost identical to Yu Wei. The excitement which Youngflame Ji had felt when he had discovered that Lotus was pregnant...

Ning had a strange feeling. It was as though he had completely become one with Youngflame Ji, as though he and Yu Wei were about to have a child together.

"I, Youngflame Ji, swear that I will definitely take good care of you and our son." When Youngflame Ji said these words...Ning felt a powerful sense of responsibility.

A husband's...a father's...

Responsibility.

"Can it be that they are also going to..." Ning could vaguely see their future, a future that caused Ning's heart to feel pain. This girl looked identical to Yu Wei. She was simple and honest, but her heart was whole-

heartedly with her man. Ning truly didn't wish to see Lotus die.

Time passed, one day after another.

Lotus' belly grew bigger and bigger. The young Youngflame Ji was working hard to acquire all sorts of treasured herbs, which he gave to Lotus to eat. "My child must be born with the best of talent. In the future, he will definitely become an important person."

Each time Youngflame Ji had that eager, excited look on his face, Lotus would laugh as she looked at her man.

This was bliss.

"Everyone in the city is to be evacuated!" An ancient voice echoed throughout the city. Youngflame Ji, who had been holding his pregnant wife's hand and accompanying her on a stroll, was startled.

Moments later...

The world around them changed.

Youngflame Ji and Lotus had arrived within a pocket dimension which was filled with countless people.

"Lotus, are you alright?" Youngflame Ji was extremely worried.

"I'm fine. But...but where are we?" Lotus, rather worried as well, clutched at Youngflame Ji's hand.

"Don't worry. I'm here." Youngflame Ji vigilantly scanned their surroundings.

Not too long afterwards...

Whoosh...

A second round of teleportations. This time, they were moved to Old Demon Windraiser's pearl, and the population became even denser.

"No..." Ning's heart was filled with regret. He truly didn't want to see this...this scene of utter despair.

Rumble...

The world broke apart.

Screams of terror...rage...despair...

Countless people began to die within the shattering dimension.

“No, no, no...” The youth was completely dazed. He stared in terror at the surrounding world. He had sworn an oath...he was going to protect his wife! “What should I do? What should I do?!” He was blaming himself over and over; he would rather die than let his beloved wife die! He couldn’t forget how they had met...the countless hardships they had experienced together before they had finally been able to be together...

“Lotus...” The youth looked towards the girl, his tears falling down.

He truly was helpless!

“It’s good that we’re together...our entire family is together...” Lotus tightly clutched her man with one hand while gently touching her stomach with the other.

Whoosh....

The shattering dimension showed no mercy at all. As the cracks in reality swept towards them...the man, the woman, and the child in the woman’s belly all perished.

The dimension was completely destroyed.

Ning even ‘saw’ that giant golden palm appear in the outside world. It was this golden palm that had shattered the Qiankun pearl, causing the three of them to all perish.

And that giant golden palm...was Ning’s palm.

“Why? Why wasn’t I just a bit more careful...why did I have to destroy it?” Upon seeing Lotus die, he couldn’t help but feel as though Yu Wei had just died in front of him. The agony which Youngflame Ji felt was sent straight to Ning’s own heart, causing him to feel pain as well.

“It was my fault.”

“I shouldn’t have.”

“Shouldn’t have.”

Ning had reached the ‘iceheart’ stage. Although he felt regret ...in the deepest recesses of his heart, he was still able to maintain his state of cold transcendence. He was still able to completely control the emotions he felt regarding what had happened in the outside world, causing it to be unable to shake his inner heart.

.....

One story after another.

Ning’s soul rode with one individual after another. For some, he only spent a few months with them; for others, he spent more than ten years. Each person was the type which Ning absolutely wouldn’t have been willing to kill...and in fact, many of their stories resonated with him. This sort of soul-riding felt almost like a form of rebirth. However, because Ning had reached the ‘iceheart’ level, he was able to separate all those emotions from his inner heart, causing it to remain unshaken.

However...the more Ning saw, the more he felt a certain desire in his heart...

If only I hadn’t shattered that Qiankun pearl, how wonderful things would be!

Although Ning felt this desire...he also understood that there was no way to change things. He couldn’t take it back.

.....

This sorts of feelings continuously accumulated within his heart. Suddenly...

“Mother! Second matron!”

“Lotus!”

“Master!”

“Junior apprentice-brother!”

“Why, why?!”

“I don’t want to die!”

“My baby! Aaaaaaaah!”

In that instant...

Ning had experienced all sorts of powerful emotions over the course of riding with a thousand lives. All sorts of resentment, anger, pain, embarrassment, agony...they all suddenly gathered together. Before this, although Ning was deeply impacted by the emotions he felt when riding with one of the victims, the emotions came in a single, sudden rush. This time, however...all of the emotions came crashing upon him at the same time. The self-recrimination he felt came crashing down upon him like a wave, instantly drowning him within its waters.

“It was all because of you. You!”

“Why did you break it? Why?!”

“You should be damned.”

“Damned!”

“Die.”

“If you die, you’ll be free.”

“Free.”

A flood of emotions...countless voices...they completely buried and smothered Ning. In fact, they were even able to breach Ning’s ‘iceheart’ and completely fill every inch of his inner heart.

This was the most difficult tribulation of the three tribulations of the ‘red dust tribulations’...the ‘thousand lives heart-tribulation’!

Chapter 5: Ruler

The most terrifying tribulation of the red dust tribulations was this one, the thousand lives heart-tribulation. It was an experience akin to being reborn a thousand times. If one's Dao-heart was weak, one would probably be lost forever...

After all, to Immortal cultivators, with the passage of countless lifetimes, one would begin to lose the memories of one's former lives. With so many personalities and experiences in one place...the original personality and person would be lost.

Experiencing a thousand lives, in and of itself, was enough to cause many Loose Immortals to be lost...at which point, the karmic sinflames would burn their souls to ashes.

The thousand lives heart-tribulation was even worse; it wasn't as simple as causing someone to be actually reborn a thousand times! Ji Ning was a classic example; with each rebirth, he 'possessed' the spirit of someone whose story and personality resonated with his own...and each of their stories caused him to feel self-recrimination and regret. If instead he had been randomly 'reincarnated' or 'possessed' the body of an evildoer, Ning's iceheart-level mind probably wouldn't have been shaken in the slightest.

But every single time, Ning's soul rode with someone whose life experiences and histories resonated with himself. Slowly...these experiences had penetrated his iceheart and entered his inner heart.

And then...they had all merged together!

A flood of emotions born from a thousand lives suddenly exploded forth, reaching an inconceivable level of intensity. This was the final strike of the thousand lives heart-tribulation...and the most terrifying strike of all! Countless peerless geniuses had perished to this strike.

Rumble...

His 'iceheart' had been completely infiltrated and submerged. Ning was

no longer able to maintain that state at all.

“Damn you.”

“Your fault.”

“Die, die.”

“Go die.”

“I want you dead!”

“Vengeance for Lotus.”

The figures from a thousand lifetimes swam before his eyes. They were roaring with rage, their faces savage and vicious.

“...It’s all my fault. It’s my fault. My fault. If I hadn’t shattered that Qiankun pearl, all of them would still be alive. They had children... wives...parents...siblings...if it hadn’t been for me, they would still be living happy lives...” Ning had already been completely submerged by the endless waves of emotions that were crashing through him.

“Death is a form of escape...I owe them...I can’t face them...only in death...”

.....

Within the Nihilum Zone. Within a vast, seemingly endless black void wave. Ning just drifted about with the waves, sent flying repeatedly in different directions.

His eyes were shut. He simply lay there, amidst the waves.

If Uncle White and Little Qing were present, they would have immediately noticed that Ning’s aura was growing increasingly weak at an utterly alarming rate. This was the exact moment when the final, explosive strike of the thousand lives heart-tribulation had arrived!

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“The seven days are almost up.”

“It’s almost been seven days...Master will definitely survive. Definitely.”

“Senior apprentice-brother...”

Uncle White, Little Qing, and Mu Northson were quietly waiting at Swallow Mountain. Uncle White was no longer drinking, Northson was no longer repeatedly sighing and blaming himself, while Little Qing was constantly mumbling to herself nonstop.

They were all waiting and hoping...

Seven days ago, the karmic sinflames had descended.

Now, seven days later...Ji Ning would be facing the most dangerous test of all.

“You have to survive.”

.....

Within the void waves of the Nihilum Zone. Ning’s aura was rapidly weakening in strength...but when it reached an extremely low level, that tiny strand of will just wouldn’t die out, no matter what. It was as though something was forcibly sustaining Ning’s Dao-heart, causing it to be unable to completely, truly break apart.

Within Ning’s soul.

It was completely dark here.

Under the pressure of that torrent of emotions from a thousand lives, Ning’s Dao-heart had weakened so much that his soul had been thrust into utter darkness, the darkness of utter despair. Logically speaking, Ning should have already succumbed to it...but he had not.

“I want to be carefree and unbound!”

“I want to control my own destiny, and to not be toyed with by fate!”

“I don’t want for those I love to leave me...”

In the moment when his Dao-heart sank down to its lowest depths...a voice rang out in the deepest part of his heart. This was Ji Ning’s own voice, a resolute voice, the voice he used when he was at his most stubborn, his most unyielding.

This was a chant which Ning had shouted to himself, even back in his previous life on Earth.

In this life, after seeing his parents perish one by one at Swallow Mountain...this desire was only reinforced.

When he came to understand his own sword-heart...he realized that his sword-heart sought true freedom, sought mastery over his own destiny!

This was the voice that rang out in the deepest depths of Ning's soul.

"I..."

"I am Ji Ning."

"I ask to be carefree and unbound, to control my own destiny, and not to be toyed with by fate." Ning's Dao-heart rapidly began to condense and strengthen, and as it did, the aura of the young body that was floating about within the Nihilum Zone began to strengthen as well.

Ning slowly regained consciousness. His mind gradually returned to him.

That faith, that chant...it had come from his very essence, rather than from his mind or consciousness.

Now that his mind had returned, Ning's Dao-heart began to heal even more rapidly. His Dao-heart was also growing even firmer and more dense. "It was indeed my fault that they died...but they are already dead. All that is in the past. There is no way to reverse the flow of time, and there is no way to change past history. Punishing one's self for something one can no longer alter...that is nothing more than being made a fool of by fate! The only one who rules over myself...is myself!"

Whooooosh.

The youth floating within the dark void waves of the Nihilum Zone suddenly opened his eyes. His eyes gleamed like the stars, filled with unfathomable profoundness.

"I survived. The karmic sinflames...I endured them," the youth murmured softly.

The karmic sinflames had already turned invisible. It was difficult to see them with the naked eye; one had to use divine sense or coresense to see them. The invisible karmic sinflames continued to swirl around Ning, but they no longer conjured any more illusions. The likes of the 'soullkiller tribulation', the 'red dust tribulation', and the 'thousand lives heart-tribulation' would no longer appear. The karmic sinflames, however, did continue to burn away at Ning's soul, causing Ning to feel pain.

This pain could not compare to the pain Ning had felt when undergoing the first tribulation, the 'soullkiller tribulation'; the soullkiller tribulation brought pain into one's very essence, and thus could increase without any limit. By contrast, there was a limit to how much pain the current karmic sinflames could bring.

However...the pain one felt when one's soul was being burnt was far greater than the pain one felt when one's flesh was being burnt.

Although surviving karmic sinflames was a form of baptism for the spirit, the agony of having one's soul being burned...this, too, was a form of punishment for sin.

"No wonder everyone says that those who can survive karmic sinflames truly are incomparably demonic figures," Ning sighed. "If a vile fiend truly did decide to kill countless innocents and cause karmic sinflames to descend, and yet was still able to withstand the thousand lives heart-tribulation...one can imagine what sort of a heart he has!"

"After having survived the karmic sinflames, my heart has reached the 'iceheart' level; in fact, I nearly reached the 'ruler' level," Ning sighed to himself.

At the last instant, he had broken free of his shackles and awoken.

This was because within his heart, he had a powerful desire sustaining him...and this desire called him awake, condensed his Dao-heart, and made Ning realize that he had to be the one who was the ruler of his own destiny. Even if he was to die...he should only die if he himself chose to die. As for any others who wished to make him die? They could forget about it!

Still, although he understood this in principle, Ning also realized that he hadn't truly reached the 'ruler' level.

[Houyi's Archery] broke heartforce out into multiple levels. The first level was the basic level, the second level was the iceheart level, and the third level was the ruler level!

Once one reached the 'ruler' level...one would be the absolute master of one's self! All outside forces could forget about trying to shake one's heart. If one truly did reach the 'ruler' level, neither the red dust tribulation nor the thousand lives heart-tribulation would be able to cause Ning's aura to weaken in the slightest. This was because Ning would be able to completely ignore all sorts of foreign, outside emotions and feelings.

If the 'iceheart' level could be described as completely separating one's inner heart from the outside world and maintaining utter cold calmness, then the 'ruler' level was a form of supremacy and transcendence. It is better to channel than to dam; experts who had reached the 'ruler' level in heartforce would no longer act to intentionally suppress their emotions and desires, not even in the innermost depths of their heart.

Let any emotions or feelings come as they may...like Yu the Great taming the floods, no matter what waves or floods come, one would be the master of them all.

"I'm not quite there yet."

"The final tribulation, the thousand lives heart-tribulation, caused my 'iceheart' to be improved, nearing perfection. I'm now very close to the 'ruler' level." Ning knew this...but although he knew and could sense that at the end, when he was in the grips of despair, he even touched what it meant to be at the 'ruler' level...actually breaking through to truly reach that level would take a long time.

A breakthrough in the spirit...

This was even more difficult than a breakthrough in training in a Dao.

For Immortal cultivators, the most important thing of all was the Dao-

heart. Next came one's insights into the Dao. Last of all was one's cultivation base!

If one's Dao-heart was insufficient...no matter how high your cultivation base was or how many Daos you had comprehended, you would still end up deviating and going berserk. The more powerful you were, the more likely you would die, in fact!

The Dao-heart had to be powerful. Only with a powerful Dao-heart and enough insights into the Dao should a person break through to the next cultivation level. For many peerless geniuses and reincarnated Immortals who had awakened their memories, they had strong enough Dao-hearts and enough insights into the Dao that they could simply use liquefied elemental essence and spirit-pills to increase their cultivation base to the level they wanted it to be at. However, no matter what they did, they wouldn't raise it to a level which was beyond what their Dao-hearts or cultivation bases could handle.

One could rapidly increase one's cultivation base, but there was no shortcut to strengthening the Dao-heart or comprehending the Dao.

"Despite all this, I was still unable to reach the 'ruler' level. What a pity. If I had reached it...I would have become a truly supreme divine archer of the Three Realms," Ning sighed.

[Houyi's Archery] divided heartforce up into five major levels.

The third level was the 'ruler' level; at this level, one could be considered one of the supreme divine archers of the Three Realms.

The fourth level was the level which the absolute best divine archers of the current Three Realms had reached.

As for the fifth level...this was Houyi's level. However, this divine archer of the Primordial Era, Houyi, had disappeared for countless years. Some claimed he was dead, while others said that he had secluded himself somewhere. However...what was undisputed was that he had gone missing for far, far too long. It was very rare for an expert to be patient enough to go into hiding for that long without interacting with any other major powers, and so quite a few suspected him of being dead.

Ning had nearly perfected the second level of heartforce, 'iceheart'. His heartforce was so powerful that he could now be considered one of the top divine archers of the Three Realms.

Before this, Ning had merely reached the basic level; this had been only enough to let him be ranked amongst the divine archers.

Rumble...

A voidwave swept across Ning, pushing him thousands of kilometers away and bringing him to his senses.

"What a powerful wave. If I hadn't trained in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], I would've died long ago." Only now did Ning leave his state of pensiveness and come to his senses. He began to inspect his surroundings. He was within an utterly dark void, and he could vaguely make out voidwaves and voidwinds rage about. "What is this place? Uh... why isn't there any natural energy here at all?"

Ning discovered to his astonishment that there was no natural energy of Heaven and Earth here. Immortal cultivators needed to absorb and refine natural energy in order to replenish their elemental ki, while Immortals needed it to replenish their Immortal energy.

"And...where is the Dao?"

"The Dao of the Heavens?"

In the past, he could clearly sense the Grand Dao of the Sword, the Grand Dao of the Waterdrop, as well as many other Daos...but Ning discovered to his amazement that now none of them seemed to exist. He couldn't sense them at all. The Dao of the Heavens was missing...which meant that no matter how he infused his swordplay with the profound mysteries of the Dao, he wouldn't be able to summon any of the power of the natural world at all.

"No natural elemental energy...and not even the Dao of the Heavens exists?" Ning stared into the black, dark void around him in disbelief. "Where...where is this place?!"

Chapter 6: Wandering

“A place like this actually exists? Not even the Dao of the Heavens is present...then, this means that all of the mysteries and intricacies of the Dao are useless here.” Ning waved his hand, instantly producing a Darknorth sword. He immediately waved the sword out. Swish! Sword-light flashed...but nothing else happened. It must be understood that at Ning’s current level, any casual sword blow was capable of summoning the power and majesty of Heaven and Earth; for example, the ninth stance of the [Three-Foot Sword] could transform the sword into a divine black dragon!

But right now...no matter how Ning swung his sword and no matter what sword-arts he used, the only thing that accompanied his sword was a flash of sword-light...and the flash came from light reflecting off the Darknorth sword!

“It doesn’t matter how deep my insights into the Dao are?”

“What the hell sort of a place is this?” Ning was mystified...but then he had a thought. “Can this be the legendary...Primordial Ruinworld?”

Ning had heard of the Primordial Ruinworld when he had been at Mount Innerheart. It was the most dangerous place that he knew of, a place that existed within the Void that was beyond the Three Realms.

According to the legends...

After Pangu’s World shattered, the Three Realms were born...but the ‘skeleton’ of Pangu’s World remained. These remnants were known as the Primordial Ruinworld! The Primordial Ruinworld was not a complete world; it was a shattered world, making it even more terrifying. Space and time were in a state of chaos here, and dangers abounded.

Even True Gods and Daofathers risked death by coming here.

“Wait, that’s not right.” Ning shook his head. “The Primordial Ruinworld should be akin to a collection of shattered worlds; why is it that I’m within a region that is surrounded by voidwinds, as though I was

within a completely empty area?”

“Senior bear, Rahu Bow,” Ning suddenly called out.

Whoosh! A black-robed youth appeared next to him; it was the Rahu Bow.

“Senior bear?” Ning called out again.

“It’s dangerous in the outside world; I cannot emerge.” The giant yellow bear’s voice rang out within Ning’s mind.

“Dangerous? Aren’t you the spirit of the underwater estate?” Ning was puzzled.

The black-robed youth said, surprised, “Master, don’t you know? Senior bear, through cultivation as the spirit of the underwater estate, has long since transcended being a mere treasure. He is now a true, living being.”

“What?!” Ning was stunned.

“You damned bow...I haven’t even told him yet, and you went and blurted it out,” the giant yellow bear sent mentally.

Ning called out in surprise, “Senior bear, you...you’ve already...” Ning had naturally heard that treasure-spirits could cultivate, and that spirits of Protocosmic spirit-treasures could even become Immortals, completely escaping the confines of their treasure-body and existing on their own!

“I wasn’t in a rush to tell you, but I didn’t expect this Rahu Bow to blurt it out. Yes...Master treated me with tremendous kindness. In the Three Realms, there have always been Protocosmic spirit-treasures who have trained to become Celestial Immortals; in fact, some have even become Daofathers! After forging me, Master taught me cultivation methods suitable for treasure-spirits. Over the passage of countless years, I’ve naturally been slowly training in these methods. I’ve long ago become a true, living creature. However...my level of cultivation isn’t high enough, and I cannot yet completely escape the Starseizing Manor,” the giant yellow bear said.

“Ah?!” Ning was speechless. Suddenly, he thought back to the first time

he had met with Patriarch Subhuti. Patriarch Subhuti had said something, back then: “Go back to the Starseizing Manor. You cannot break away from the Starseizing Manor for now.” Back then, Ning had been confused by what the Daofather had meant by these words, and had also been puzzled by why the giant yellow bear was able to shed tears.

So this was the reason behind it all!

“The outside world is dangerous and can cause tremendous damage to me. I cannot go out,” the giant yellow bear sent mentally. “Ji Ning, you have the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] protecting you, while the Rahu Bow has not cultivated and thus has nothing to worry about.”

“Senior bear, Rahu Bow...do you know where we are?” Ning asked.

Both of these figures had existed since the Primordial Era.

“Where we are...?” The giant bear was puzzled.

“I don’t know either...” The Rahu Bow was similarly puzzled.

Ning suddenly remembered that when Pangu’s World had been destroyed, one had been sealed away within the Crescent world while the other had hidden within the world of the Grand Xia. Most likely, they knew very little about the outside worlds.

“I’ve heard that the skeletal remnants of the shattered Primordial World, also known as the Primordial Ruinworld, still exist. Within that place, space and time are in a state of chaos. In some places, not even the Dao of the Heavens exist, and even True Gods or Daofathers who go there might perish,” Ning said. “The Dao of the Heavens does not exist in this place, so my guess is that this is the Primordial Ruinworld. However...the only thing around me is an endless void. I can even sense a voidwind, but there are no continents whatsoever. So what do you two think? Where are we?”

“Who told you that the Primordial Ruinworld consists of the skeletal remnants of Pangu’s World?” The Rahu Bow asked.

“Isn’t this public knowledge?” Ning asked.

Ning did indeed know that the destruction of Pangu's World involved many secrets...but aside from the skeletal remnants of Pangu's World, what else could the Primordial Ruinworld be?

"What the public knows is wrong!" The black-robed youth was disdainful.

"It is indeed wrong," the giant yellow bear sent mentally. "In fact, even I'm not too sure about the true truth behind the birth of the Primordial Ruinworld."

"Eh?" Ning was startled. "Senior bear, what do you know?"

"Ask your master in the future," the giant yellow bear said. "The Rahu Bow and I are merely treasures, and Rahu's master, Qi, was merely an Empyrean God. Although the master I followed was more powerful, Master hid me away long before he went to participate in the final battle, and so I know very little. Your master's status is even higher than my master's; he definitely knows far more than me."

Ning nodded lightly.

"However...I can tell you with certainty that the Primordial Ruinworld isn't as simple a matter as you have described it to be. If it truly was merely the remnants of Pangu's World, how could it be such a terrifying place? You need to understand that Pangu's World was an extremely normal world, whereas the Primordial Ruinworld you have described is far too terrifying. Not even the Dao of the Heavens exists within it...it truly is bizarre!" The giant yellow bear continued, "As for this place where you are right now...I've given it some thought, and I believe that it should be the region where the Void meets the Primordial Ruinworld...the Nihilum Zone!"

"Nihilum Zone?" Ning's eyes instantly lit up.

He naturally knew about nihilum zones.

A major world was like an island that existed within the vast, infinite Void! At the borders where the Void met the island, stormy voidwaves would emerge and crash against the world. This region would commonly

be referred to as a nihilum zone. However, because major worlds were 'tiny', the voidwaves around them would be very weak, and so the nihilum zones around the likes of the Grand Xia world were quite safe. For people like Ning, at least, they were like tiny little ripples.

"Right. Everyone says that the Primordial Ruinworld is comparable to Pangu's World in size; it is infinitely vaster than ordinary major worlds," Ning immediately said. "Then the place where the Primordial Ruinworld meets with the Void will naturally have far more powerful voidstorms."

"Right!"

"This should indeed be the Nihilum Zone outside the Primordial Ruinworld," Ning said. "Only a place as mysterious as the Primordial Ruinworld can possibly result in a place where even the Dao of the Heavens cannot be sensed."

"Ji Ning, no matter what, you absolutely must not enter the Primordial Ruinworld. The Primordial Ruinworld probably still has remnants of dangerous power within it," the giant yellow bear sent hurriedly. "A huge number of True Gods and Daofathers died in the past within this place; even if it's no longer as dangerous as it was before, for someone like you to enter might result in instant disintegration."

"Right, right, right. Don't go in!" The Rahu Bow hurriedly agreed.

"Of course not. After all, according to the legends...not even True Gods or Daofathers are willing to recklessly enter the Primordial Ruinworld." Ning nodded.

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An hour later.

Boom...

The voidwaves were growing increasingly powerful, sending Ning flipping more than ten thousand kilometers away before he was able to come to a halt.

"...That's way too much power. The harder I press forward, the more

powerful the waves become.” Ning felt helpless. “How am I supposed to get out of here?”

“You are so stupid.” The black-robed youth stood next to him, completely ignoring the voidwaves. He roared with laughter, “The voidwaves will naturally weaken once they grow close to a major world... but the farther away they are, the more savage they become, until they reach a certain limit! If this Primordial Ruinworld is comparable to Pangu’s World in size, then most likely only a True God or Daofather will be able to force their way out of the Nihilum Zone. Not even Empyrean Gods or True Immortals will be able to accomplish it. Given your power... there’s no way you can possibly force your way out past the waves.”

“Then am I supposed to just go along with the waves?” Ning asked.

“If you go with the waves, you’ll end up in the Primordial Ruinworld. That’s death,” the Rahu Bow said.

“Then what should I do?” Ning was helpless.

He couldn’t force his way against the waves, but if he went along with them into the Primordial Ruinworld, that would be suicide.

“What else can you do? Try your best to stay alive,” the Rahu Bow said. “Just slowly train within this Nihilum Zone. The power of the Solar Star and Lunar Star cover this place; you can continue to train in divine power.”

“That’s my only choice, I suppose.” Ning couldn’t come up with any ideas, no matter what he did.

So...he might as well as just wander.

He’d slowly drift about on the voidwaves. As long as he didn’t go too close to the Primordial Ruinworld, it didn’t matter where he went.

He would train on his journey.

.....

As Ning was drifting about within the Nihilum Zone outside the Primordial Ruinworld. Within the Youngflame clan’s tower.

Whoosh! A streak of light flew into the tower; it was the horned, golden-robed man.

“Ancestor.”

“Master.”

Everyone called out to him.

“I’ve already sent Windraiser to the mini-Netherworld.” The Youngflame Ancestor nodded, then said, “The Ten Yama-Kings of Hell of the mini-Netherworld gave me face, but Windraiser’s sin was simply too deep; he’s currently being tormented and tortured within the endless depths of Hell. After his torture ends and his sin has dissipated, he’ll be reborn into your Youngflame clan. However...that will be more than eight million years from now.”

Celestial Immortals Infatuation, Sunfish, and the others all nodded.

Tremendous sinners who entered the Netherworld would indeed suffer mightily; there was nothing that could be done about this.

“Ji Ning and Windraiser both suffered the descent of karmic sinflames.” The Youngflame Ancestor’s face turned grim and sinister. “Now that more than seven days has passed...he is either dead or alive. Come up with a way to have some of our people go investigate Ji Ning’s school, the Black-White College. If he is dead, his life-tablet within the Black-White College will shatter. Investigate in detail; we absolutely must find out if his life-tablet is intact or not.”

“Alright.” Each of them assented.

“I’ll make the arrangements,” Celestial Immortal Arcanum said. He carried out the most miscellaneous tasks amongst their group; after all, he was the weakest of the Celestial Immortals.

“Fine. Arcanum, you can handle it. Remember, you have to investigate this in detail; you have to verify whether or not his life-tablet is intact. You can’t just listen to some wild rumors or speculations.” The Youngflame Ancestor’s eyes narrowed. “Until I know for sure that he is dead...I will find it hard to rest at ease.”

All six of them had solemn looks on their faces.

If Ning didn't die, they would feel uneasy.

After all...it was incredibly difficult for a Celestial Immortal to be born, but they had lost two of them to Ji Ning! In addition, if Ning truly had managed to survive...that calamitous fiend would most likely cause the Youngflame clan to continue to suffer terrifying losses in the future.

Chapter 7: Half A Year Later

As the Youngflame clan was planning to send people to Stillwater City and come up with a way to verify Ning's status...the Xia Emperor, within the imperial capital of the Grand Xia, was planning to send out his subordinate, Skyfox.

"Skyfox, pay a visit to the Black-White College. I need to know if Ji Ning is alive or not."

"Yes, Master," Skyfox said, accepting the order immediately.

The Xia Emperor cared deeply about whether or not Ning was alive. He had decided long ago that Ning had to be a Daofather's disciple. Could it be that such a peerless figure had truly perished? Emotionally speaking, the Xia Emperor truly couldn't believe this...but after hearing the report from Youngflame Freak, he had immediately dispatched his Godslayer Guards to deal with the escaped Fiendgods, then began to use his Mirror of Omniscience to watch what was happening within the Oldjade mountain range. He had personally watched the descent of the karmic sinflames through the Mirror of Omniscience!

"He's trained for less than a century, after all. Although he is a genius the likes of which the entire major world rarely sees...in the face of the descent of karmic sinflames, he has less than a ten percent chance of surviving." The Xia Emperor had watched Ning battle with the Youngflame clan through his Mirror of Omniscience. He wanted to be friends with Ning, while the Youngflame clan was his subordinate tribe... it truly wasn't appropriate for him to intervene, and so all he could do was help neither side.

Stillwater City. The Black-White College.

A white-robed, white-haired man was flying towards Immortal Diancai's residence.

"What? You want to know if Ji Ning is alive or not?" Immortal Diancai glanced at Immortal Skyfox, utter confusion on his face. "Fellow Daoist Skyfox, why would you ask such a thing?"

“Eh?” Immortal Diancai turned his head to glance outwards. As the master of this place, he had naturally set up a series of simple formations around his mountain. When the white-robed, white-haired Whitewater Hound arrived, Immortal Diancai noticed right away. Frowning, he murmured to himself, “The Whitewater Hound came as well?”

“Whitewater Hound?” Immortal Skyfox smiled. “Since Ji Ning’s spirit-beast is here...it’s best for you to ask the Whitewater Hound about Ji Ning, fellow Daoist Diancai. He will definitely know more than I do.”

“Brother White.” Immortal Diancai immediately called out to him.

Although Uncle White wasn’t a formal disciple of the Black-White College, he was the spirit-beast of a formal disciple and was also a Void-level Earth Immortal. His status within the Black-White College was now far higher than it had been, and he was allowed to go to almost anywhere he pleased.

“Immortal Diancai.” Uncle White walked over. Upon seeing the seated Skyfox, he immediately said, “My respects to you, Immortal Skyfox.”

“Sit,” Immortal Diancai immediately urged.

Uncle White sat down. Immortal Diancai immediately asked him, “Fellow Daoist Skyfox came to my place to ask about whether our Ji Ning is alive or not. What has happened to him?”

Uncle White couldn’t help but look towards Skyfox.

Skyfox said, “I have come on orders from the Xia Emperor to investigate this matter.”

“The Xia Emperor sent out the Godslayer Guards; he must know exactly what happened within the Oldjade mountain range. Is there really a need for me to spell everything out?” Uncle White had a rather ugly look on his face; he felt that given that the Xia Emperor had sent out the Godslayer Guards, he should’ve been able to rescue Ning...but he had not.

“The Xia Emperor only sent out the Godslayer Guards after receiving a report from the Youngflame clan that many Fiendgods had escaped into the world,” Skyfox immediately said. “At first, he didn’t know about what

had happened with Ji Ning. Only when the Godslayer Guards returned to make their report did he learn that Ji Ning was present as well...and so the Xia Emperor went to query the Youngflame clan, at which point he learned what had happened. However, by then it was far too late!"

Uncle White didn't say anything.

"What are you talking about?!" Immortal Diancai asked.

"My son Ning has an extremely deep feud with the Youngflame clan," Uncle White said plainly. "The Youngflame clan wasn't willing to let things rest either, and so Ning charged straight into the Youngflame clan's headquarters. They weren't able to do anything to him, but they played a dirty trick which caused him to kill more than ten billion ordinary mortals. Karmic sinflames instantly descended upon him."

"He accidentally killed ten billion mortals, causing the descent of karmic sinflames?" Immortal Diancai's face immediately changed.

He viewed Ji Ning as he might one of his own children. Upon hearing that Ning had accidentally killed ten billion mortals and caused the descent of karmic sinflames, he was instantly stupefied.

"Then where is he now?" Immortal Diancai asked.

"My son Ning was instantly assaulted and burned by karmic sinflames, but the Youngflame clan still wouldn't let it rest. They used some sort of teleportation technique to send him far beyond the world of the Grand Xia," Uncle White said, his face ashen.

"How long ago did the karmic sinflames begin to wreath themselves around him?" Immortal Diancai asked.

"Seven days ago," Uncle White said. "More than seven days have passed, but I can sense that he is still alive. He's survived the karmic sinflames."

Immortal Diancai let out a sigh of relief.

Karmic sinflames!

They were utterly terrifying. Even he, Ning's master, wouldn't dare claim that he would definitely be able to withstand them. He felt both

worried for and proud of his disciple.

“Congratulations, felicitations! He overcame the karmic sinflames tribulations.” The nearby Skyfox laughed, but his heart was still filled with utter amazement. And not just him...even the Xia Emperor had felt that Ji Ning was extremely unlikely to have survived the karmic sinflames.

“He should have finished with the karmic sinflames tribulations roughly three or four hours ago.” Uncle White continued in a low voice, “He naturally has a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal with him...he would’ve teleported back long ago, unless he was trapped within some sort of unescapable danger zone. Since he hasn’t come back...he’s clearly trapped in a place where even a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal does not work.”

Immortal Diancai’s face turned ugly again.

Skyfox nodded gently. “That makes sense. The Youngflame clan has an extremely terrifying clan-protecting treasure, a Protocosmic spirit-treasure that is known as the Worldhold Pagoda. The Worldhold Pagoda has the power to tear open space and teleport people through it. Given how much they hate Ji Ning, they definitely must have sent him into the infinite Void that lies beyond the Three Realms. They absolutely wouldn’t have sent him somewhere where he could simply use a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal to escape and return.”

“Then what should we do?” Immortal Diancai immediately asked.

“There’s nothing we can do. Some of the danger zones within the Void are so deadly that not even True Immortals or Empyrean Gods can escape from them.” Skyfox shook his head. “Diancai, although you’ve become a Celestial Immortal...you are unable to help Ji Ning in this matter. In addition, no one knows where he is right now.”

“The Youngflame clan...” A look of boundless rage was within Immortal Diancai’s eyes.

Immortal Diancai knew very well about the feud between Ji Ning and the Youngflame clan.

After all...in the past, Patriarch Arcanum of the Youngflame clan had actually gone to the Black-White College to try and force them to hand him over.

“Also...the Youngflame clan is extremely wary of Ji Ning,” Skyfox said. “Two of the Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan died by his hand this time. Most likely, they are going to do everything they can to investigate as to whether or not he was able to survive the karmic sinflames. Thus...they will definitely come to the Black-White College to investigate.”

“He killed two Celestial Immortals?” Immortal Diancai was surprised.

“Yes, that is why the Youngflame clan is wary of him,” Skyfox said. “This disciple of yours truly is formidable.”

Immortal Diancai quickly calmed down. Nodding, he said, “Understood. Don’t worry...the Youngflame clan can forget about learning any information regarding Ji Ning’s status from our Black-White College. Also...fellow Daoist Skyfox, I hope that your side will not leak out any information regarding his status either.”

“Don’t worry. When I return, I will make my report to the Xia Emperor, and him alone. The Xia Emperor wouldn’t act to leak this news to the Youngflame clan,” Skyfox said.

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That very day, Immortal Diancai issued an order: The Starfire Palace, where all the life-tablets of the disciples of the Black-White College were located, was to be completely sealed and locked down! Nobody was permitted to go anywhere near it! Not even the Loose Immortals of the Black-White College dared to go there now. Immortal Diancai was now a Celestial Immortal; naturally, that meant he had the highest rank and authority within the Black-White College.

In addition, the sealing of a palace that contained life-tablets was a minor matter. No one opposed it.

“Sealed?”

“Completely sealed? Why has the Black-White College suddenly and completely sealed away the Starfire Palace? Can it be that Ji Ning truly has perished?” Celestial Immortals Arcanum, Deadwood, and the others were all puzzled upon hearing this news.

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Time flowed onwards.

Immortal Diancai personally stood guard over the Starfire Palace.

“Disciple, it has been more than three months...” Immortal Diancai stared at the table in front of him, covered with life-tablets. One of the life-tablets represented Ji Ning. This life-tablet remained unbroken; clearly, Ji Ning remained alive despite being trapped in a distant danger zone.

At first, Immortal Diancai, Uncle White, Mu Northson, and the others all waited hopefully for his return. However, as more and more time passed, they gradually understood that it truly was hard to say when he would return, or if he would return at all. All they could do...was quietly hope.

Within the Nihilum Zone.

Ning was continuing to drift about within the infinite, dark Void. He didn't dare to allow himself to be swept towards the Primordial Ruinworld by the currents of voidwaves.

His wandering days were filled with boredom.

This was because he could not sense the Grand Dao of the Sword, the Grand Dao of the Waterdrop, or any other Daos. There was no way for him to cultivate in the Dao at all; all he could do was occasionally train in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. However, there was a limit to how much divine power he could absorb each day and a limit to how much time he could spend in training in it. He couldn't perpetually train...and so for more than 90% of the time each day, Ning did just one thing:

Train in archery!

Swoosh!

The Rahu Bow was pulled tight. Nint stared at the distant, impending voidwave, his heartforce completely merged into the bow and the arrow. Twang! The arrow shot out through the void.

Whoosh!

The arrow moved with lightning speed as it traversed more than a million kilometers, striking hard against the distant voidwave. In the face of the power of the voidwave, however, the arrow was sent flying straight backwards towards Ning's direction. When shooting an arrow against the flow of the voidwaves, the arrows would return. But if he shot towards any other direction...

Although these arrows were Immortal-ranked magic treasures which could be controlled through elemental ki, they flew too fast and too far; there was no way Ning would be able to recover them. And so, the only option for him was to shoot straight towards an impending voidwave.

Day after day. Every single day, he trained in archery.

Slowly, Ning began to get a better handle on the intricacies behind how [Houyi's Archery] utilized divine power, especially now that he had all but reached the peak of the 'iceheart' level. With such powerful heartforce filling each arrow, the power of each arrow was now greater than his close combat abilities!

Heartforce...

It was indeed a type of extremely powerful force. It was the reason why the divine archers of the Three Realms were so terrifying.

.....

Ning had spent roughly half a year drifting about within the Nirvana Zone. He had no idea exactly how far he had flown.

"Eh? What's that?" Ning could vaguely make out something in the distance. Because the Nirvana Zone was filled with voidwaves and voidstorms, he normally couldn't see anything else at all.

“[Torch Dragon’s Eye].”

Ning’s two eyes instantly began to blaze with torch-fire. He stared far into the distance. Instantly, his sight range began to increase rapidly, allowing him to see a few dim strands of light that had appeared far away within the darkness. Before using this divine ability, Ning was only able to see to a few thousand kilometers, but after using it...all the light of the surrounding area began to gather within his corneas.

“That is...a continent!!!!” Ning’s face changed slightly.

That continent was actually tens of millions of kilometers away from Ning. However, because of how utterly vast it was, Ning was still able to just barely make it out with eyes. For example, although the Moon was located very far away from Earth, ordinary mortals on Earth could still see it from afar. Similarly, due to how enormous that continent was, Ning was still able to make it out within the darkness of the void.

Chapter 8: First Contact

“Can that be part of the Primordial Ruinworld?” Ji Ning instantly thought of this possibility. After all, the Primordial Ruinworld wasn’t a perfect sphere or cube; it had peaks and valleys. It would make sense if he was able to see part of it bulging out.

“No matter what, I shouldn’t go near it.”

“The Primordial Ruinworld is incomparably dangerous. Not even True Gods or Daofathers dare to rashly charge into it. It’s best if I stay far away.” Ning knew his own limits; although he had the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] protecting him, he still didn’t dare to act rashly.

Whoosh!

Ning immediately began to move away from that land, pulling away from it.

Although he was quite curious about the Primordial Ruinworld, Ning knew very well...that curiosity killed the cat!

.....

Millions of kilometers away from Ning, within the distant darkness of the Void. A mysterious base was located here, one which was completely invisible to the naked eye.

Within the base.

There were numerous tall, muscular, black-scaled warriors with curved, blood-red horns who were seated on thrones. A total of eighteen thrones were hovering in the air. They each sat there silently, their golden eyes focused upon an image within an enormous mirror that hung within the air. The image displayed within the mirror was of Ji Ning, who was flying forward on his own. Ning had just used the [Torch Dragon’s Eye] and had begun to fly farther away, seeking to pull away from the continent.

“The alien has begun to flee.”

“Can it be that the alien has discovered us investigating him?”

“Shouldn’t have; we’ve never seen this alien before. He doesn’t come from our neighboring ‘Quchang’ world, nor does he come from the Heptagod world.” The eighteen mighty warriors chatted calmly with each other in the Fiendgod tongue as they sat there atop their thrones.

“This part of the Void is the dominion of our world, the Snaphorn world. Even if our neighbors from the Quchang world or the Heptagod world were to send scouts over...they wouldn’t send them flying towards us in such an overt fashion. In addition...he looks very peculiar. His skin actually looks quite soft and tender, and his body is quite tiny.”

“Can it be a scout that has been sent from an unknown world?”

They were all chatting amongst themselves.

Suddenly, the voice of the highest ranked warrior, the black-caped warrior who was seated at the very end of the eighteen thrones, rang out. “Without question, this newly arrived invader is someone we have never encountered before. He doesn’t belong to any of the neighboring worlds. As to where he comes from...if we capture him, we will know.”

“Lord Protector, I trust you yourself also saw that this alien is capable of surviving within the voidwinds. In addition, he is enduring the voidwinds through his own physical power, without relying on any outside support. Although his skin seems soft and although he is small...none of us have bodies that can compare to his,” a warrior said.

“But we have our wisdom.” The highest ranked black-caped warrior said, “Balo, go and lead a pack of your children to test this alien’s abilities. If you can capture him alive, do so; if you cannot, get a full sense of his strengths and weaknesses. This alien is wandering within the part of the Void under our control; the other bases are undoubtedly watching us. Don’t let them laugh at us.”

“Right.”

The tall warrior named Balo rose to his feet, then immediately walked out of the palace.

Every single one of the massive warriors were more than three thousand

meters in size. They were like moving mountains, and in their eyes, Ning was like a tiny little dot. However...they knew quite well that their neighbors in the Quchang world and the Heptagod world were not easy to deal with, and that any alien capable of having traversing such a great distance through the Void was most likely not easy to deal with either.

.....

Within the silent, dark void. Ning was continuously flying forward, pulling farther and farther away from that land. He had already moved more than a million kilometers away from it, but he had no idea at all... that just six thousand kilometers away from him, an enormous, invisible spaceship was drawing close to him, a vessel that couldn't even be seen with divine sense.

This enormous ship was more than a hundred kilometers long. Within it, the blood-red horned, black-scaled warrior 'Balo' was seated atop his throne. Below him was a group of similar black-scaled warriors, some of which even had enormous scaly wings. However, these warriors all had blood-red eyes, not golden ones. They all just stood there silently.

"My children," Balo said.

"Master." The ten mighty warriors standing below him all acknowledged his call in unison. They looked very similar to Balo, but they had a pair of wings which he did not, while lacking his curved horn.

"Go and capture this alien alive. If you cannot...then retreat and return. Remember...don't kill him!" Balo rubbed his jaw. "He most likely carries many secrets with him. We have to take him alive. Only then can we discover his secrets."

"Yes." The ten blood-eyed warriors all assented respectfully.

"Also...the next voidstorm is still twelve sectors away from us. You have to return before the voidstorm arrives," Balo instructed. These minions of his wouldn't dare to try and withstand the voidstorms of this place; they were tens of millions of kilometers away from their land, and the voidstorms here were still quite powerful.

The doors of the ship opened.

The ten blood-eyed warriors immediately flew out from the cabin, almost all of them at least three thousand meters tall. Even the shortest was twenty-four hundred meters tall.

.....

“Eh?” Ning, who had been flying through the void, suddenly turned his head. The torch-light blazed within his eyes. When the door to the spaceship opened, it was revealed. One after the other, the tall, muscular, black-armored warriors with giant wings and blood-red eyes came flying out of the ship at an utterly astonishing speed.

“There are living creatures here?” Ning was startled.

In the past half year, he had never encountered any other living creatures within the Nihilum Zone. And now, a large ship had suddenly appeared, as well as ten seemingly mighty figures that looked like Fiendgods.

“There shouldn’t be any living creatures within the Nihilum Zone. Then...” Ning’s heart clenched. “These living creatures must’ve entered the Void through the Primordial Ruinworld.”

The Primordial Ruinworld was extremely large; it was possible that there were some creatures which lived close to its margins. Because they lived at the borders, they were able to enter the infinite Void...but the terrifying voidwaves were simply too powerful. Based on what the Rahu Bow and the giant yellow bear had deduced, most likely only True Gods or Daofathers would be able to fly about within the Nihilum Zone.

“Alien!”

The ten enormous figures flew out, and as they did they sent out their divine sense as well.

“The Fiendgod tongue?” Ning immediately realized noticed this. Although the Fiendgod tongue was complex and hard to learn, Ning had mastered it long ago.

“Can it be that you do not understand us?” The ten massive figures stared at Ning. The large ship was drawing closer as well; it was now only a thousand kilometers away from Ning.

Ning didn't respond. He just looked back at them.

“Since he doesn't understand...then let's just go ahead and capture him first.” Instantly, one of the massive, blood-eyed warriors manifested a giant whip within his hands. He flew straight towards Ning.

“Stay your hands!” Only now did Ning send out his own divine sense, speaking in the Fiendgod tongue.

The massive, blood-eyed warrior instantly came to a halt, a hint of amusement in his blood-red eyes. “So you can understand after all, alien.”

“I merely do not wish to fight you,” Ning said.

“Then why have you trespassed into the space that belongs to our Snaphorn world?” The blood-eyed warrior instantly asked. The other nine blood-eyed warriors simply watched silently. Their assignment was to capture this alien...it was best to first test him and see what his strengths were, and so they were quite willing to spend some time chatting with this alien.

The more they spoke, the more they would learn about him.

“I trespassed by accident,” Ning said. “I do not wish to be enemies with you.”

“Trespassed by accident? If that's the case, come with us and go see our master,” the blood-eyed warrior said.

“There's no way I will leave with you.” Ning shook his head.

Was this a joke? There was no way Ning would dare to casually barge into the Primordial Ruinworld. That was a place filled with dangers that could wipe out True Gods or Daofathers.

“If that's the case...we'll have to take you back by force.” The ten blood-eyed warriors simultaneously made their move. Five of them were more than three thousand meters tall, while the other five were around twenty-

four hundred meters tall. The shorter, weaker-looking warriors simultaneously opened their mouths, emitting a soundless roar.

Rumble...

An invisible ripple spread out, instantly washing over Ning's entire body. Ning didn't even have a clue as to how he was supposed to resist this sort of attack.

"Is this some sort of hypnotic ability?" When the ripple reached him, Ning instantly understood. However, he was a Fiendgod as well; his divine soul and the flesh of his divine body had been completely fused together into an incomparably stable whole. In addition, Ning's Dao-heart had withstood even the karmic sinflames; how could this sort of hypnotic ability possibly control him?

"We're unable to control him. His spirit is extremely powerful."

"Take him by force."

The five shorter warriors all sent out mental messages.

"Fine."

The five taller warriors all produced long whips in their hands, each whip more than nine thousand meters long.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Their whips cracked out, lashing through the void towards Ning.

A Darknorth sword appeared in Ning's hand. He didn't even use the [Starseizing Hand] as he used the sword to block the attacking whips.

Bang bang bang bang bang! A series of concussive sounds; Ning simultaneously blocked all five whips.

"These warriors look like Fiendgods. In terms of strength...they are a bit weaker than me when I'm not using any divine abilities." Ning nodded to himself. "They should be considered just barely equivalent to Void-level Fiendgods."

Swoosh!

Ning made his move. The divine power within his body began to activate in accordance with the method contained within the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens]. Although he was unable to borrow any of the power of Heaven and Earth to aid him, his physical speed was already quite fast. In addition, the Darknorth sword in Ning's hand instantly expanded to become more than nine hundred meters long. Given how large his foes were, if his sword wasn't long enough, it would be quite hard for him to injure his foes.

Ning instantly flashed past the bodies of the five warriors.

Five streaks of sword-light flashed!

The heads of all five of the three thousand meter tall warriors went flying.

“What tough bodies. They seem to be even tougher than Void-level Fiendgods who haven't trained in any divine abilities.” Ning could sense that his Darknorth swords met with quite a bit of resistance as it chopped through their heads. Although he didn't have the power of the natural world to aid him, in terms of his sword techniques, he was at a vastly higher level than his foes. After all, the Dao of the Sword...was all about how to actually use and apply the sword.

“Eh?”

Ning realized, to his amazement, that green blood was pouring out from the necks of the five giant blood-eyed warriors. Their mouths were twitching...and then they simply floated away through the void, their bodies devoid of any auras.

“Dead?” Ning was completely puzzled. “Seems like they aren't Fiendgods.” Generally speaking, humans and monsters would die when their heads were severed, but killing Fiendgods required much more effort.

.....

The horned warrior within the distant spaceship chuckled when he saw this. “Blaze, my children.”

.....

Instantly, the five shorter blood-eyed warriors in front of Ning all bellowed, "Damn you, alien!" Their bodies began to glow with blurry green light. Their auras began to explosively increase in power, and within their hands appeared slender silver chains. Twirling the chains, they moved to encircle Ning.

"Their auras seem to have grown more powerful? Can it be that they are going all out?" Ning mused to himself.

Clang!

The chains collided with Ning's sword.

From this first collision...Ning was knocked flying backwards.

"Without using any divine abilities...I'm actually physically weaker than them." Ning immediately used the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens] to fly past the five blood-eyed warriors, moving away from them. At the same time, five enormous streaks of sword-light flashed past their necks. In terms of sword-arts...Ning was simply at too high a level. With his utterly astonishing speed, they truly were completely unable to stop him.

These five blood-eyed warriors also collapsed, their bodies beginning to float about within the Void, devoid of all life.

.....

The horned warrior, Balo, nodded lightly to himself from his position within the spaceship. "His strength is Earth-level, but his speed is astonishing; it can be considered Heaven-level. He uses the sword, and his sword-arts are at an extremely high level; they, too, should be considered Heaven-level. Of course...I can't exclude the possibility that he has some ability to increase his power dramatically. He's no cannon fodder; he's definitely an elite. I wonder which world actually sent him out to explore all by his lonesome? Still...fortunately, he's not TOO powerful. If he was truly powerful, he would've been able to annihilate all ten of them in a single blow. Mmm...time to go back to the base. I lost ten of my minions this time; I need to raise a new crop!"

Rumble...

The spaceship immediately turned invisible, once more flying back to the base at high speed.

Chapter 9: Human!

Within the starbase.

Seventeen horned, scaled warriors stared at the mirror and the images within it. They watched as Ji Ning slaughtered his ten opponents.

“Lord Protector.”

Balo suddenly appeared within the midair mirror. He looked through it, then said, “Lord Protector, I’ve finished my tests. This alien’s speed and sword-arts are all Heaven-level, while his power is Earth-level. In addition, he has yet to display any particularly astonishing abilities to increase his power.”

“Good.” The horned, black-caped warrior within the starbase said, “Balo, your mission is over.”

“Everyone.” The horned, black-caped warrior swept the room with his gaze. “I plan to send a report regarding this alien to the Palace of Elders. Any objections?”

“No objections.”

“None.”

They all spoke out.

“Good.” The horned, black-caped warrior nodded lightly.

.....

On a continent of the Primordial Ruinworld. Within the world known as the Snaphorn world.

Within an enormous structure that was more than thirty thousand meters high. A series of thrones hovered in the air within it in the shape of an arc. A total of nine thrones were present here.

One after another, horned, gold-caped, gold-eyed warriors with scales began to appear. Their auras were incomparably powerful. After all nine appeared, an enormous mirror appeared in the air above them, and images began to display within the mirror.

“Venerable Elders, I am Protector Qiwa of Area 1292 of the Third Void Sector.” The horned, black-caped warrior spoke with great respect through the mirror. “We have discovered an alien who has entered the Third Void Sector of our Snaphorn world. Just now, we’ve made first contact with him.”

Whoosh.

Instantly, the images of Balo sending his ten subordinates to fight against Ji Ning appeared within the mirror as well. In fact, even the conversation between Ning and the blood-eyed warriors was replayed in its entirety.

“We judge him to have power close to the Heaven-level. He may also have some other hidden abilities,” the horned, black-caped warrior said with great respect.

“Oh, an alien?”

“It’s been quite some time since we’ve seen an alien from beyond the Quchang world or the Heptagod world.”

“Interesting. He actually has two arms and two legs? And his body is so tiny...”

“Tan skin...black eyes...”

The nine Elders watched with amusement.

They had incomparably exalted statuses; most matters wouldn’t be considered important enough to be directly reported to them. However... an alien invader was one of the most important matters possible. The appearance of even a single invader required a report to be made to the Palace of Elders. After all, once a single alien appeared...it meant that a planetary war might soon erupt.

“An alien which we have never seen before. He flies at a fairly ordinary speed...but he’s still able to advance against the voidwaves. This means his body must be quite powerful, at least. Or perhaps he might have a special method to block the voidstorms?” An Elder smiled. “I recommend that we sent out a commando squad from the Third Void Sector to

capture the alien. After that, we will dissect and analyze him. An alien that we've never met before, and which is able to block the voidwaves despite being so small...he's worthy of analysis."

"I recommend...that we completely mobilize the Third Void Sector. We absolutely must ensure that he cannot escape."

"Complete mobilization? That will use up too much of our strength. This alien isn't able to fly that fast; the warriors that we send out can easily catch up to him. There's no need whatsoever for us to completely mobilize the Third Void Sector."

"But this is a completely unknown alien; we can't let him escape."

"Can it be that you think the commando squads of the Third Void Sector are unable to deal with him?"

The Elders debated back and forth.

But right at this moment...

Rumble...

A terrifying presence descended.

The nine mighty Elders all raised their heads to look, only to see an enormous figure appear in the skies. This figure consisted of an enormous golden eye...and this illusory golden eye alone was already more than thirty thousand meters wide.

"Queen Mother." The nine Elders all rose to their feet, saluting respectfully.

The enormous golden eye stared intently at the image of Ning, a look of excitement and anger appearing within it. A rumbling voice boomed forth...

"Right...there's no mistaking it! That's a human! A HUMAN!!!"

"Human?" The nine Elders were completely puzzled.

"Queen Mother, what's a human?"

"He's a human?"

They were all completely baffled.

“The powerful humans...the terrifying humans...” The golden eye stared intently at Ning as the voice continued to echo forth within the entire Palace of Elders. “They are the masters of the Three Realms. They are the culprits who pursued us and killed us...the common enemy of our Snaphorn world, the Heptagod world, the Quchang world, and countless other worlds.”

“The masters of the ‘Three Realms’?”

“Where are these ‘Three Realms’?”

“The common enemy of countless worlds?”

The Elders grew more and more confused.

The golden eye stared carefully at Ning, continuing to speak. “Long, long, long ago, there was a great war...a war which truly tore apart even chaos itself, a war which shattered the Void. The final end to that great war resulted in the formation of this shattered, chaotic land. As for the beautiful, stable, all-encompassing Three Realms...they were taken over by another force, a powerful force! As for us, the defeated...our only choice was to come here and live with this unstable, shattered, Infinite Land.”

“What?”

“Our Infinite Land...is a land of the defeated?”

“How, how can this be?”

“Our Snaphorn world is already incomparably powerful, but the Infinite Land has even more powerful presences within it. It even has many ‘Sacred Ancients’ within it; how could it be a land of the defeated?”

The nine Elders couldn’t believe it. They didn’t want to believe it. They had always felt themselves to be extremely powerful, while the combined powers of the Infinite Land were even more powerful...but they were actually still inferior to this so-called ‘Three Realms’?

“Sacred Ancients are known as ‘Daofathers’ or ‘True Gods’ in the Three

Realms!” The golden eye continued to speak. “The Three Realms have many True Gods and Daofathers...in fact, they even have powers that are above True Gods and Daofathers...especially that legendary figure known as Nuwa. She was truly too terrifying...even Sacred Ancients were instantly slain before her.”

“What?!” The nine Elders were completely stunned.

Sacred Ancients? Instantly slain?

Nuwa?

Who was this Nuwa?

The nine Elders firmly engraved the name ‘Nuwa’ into their memories.

“There are some extremely powerful Daofathers in the Three Realms who are capable of annihilating our Snaophorn world with but the wave of a hand. When they part their lips, flames will emerge that can engulf the space of the void, causing even space itself to be set alight. When they brandish their swords....they can cause multiple Sacred Ancients to flee without recourse.” A faraway look was in pupil of the golden eye as it continued to speak slowly.

The nine Elders all knew very well that their Queen Mother was the founder and builder of their world, a figure who had existed ever since the days of the most ancient of wars.

What the Queen Mother spoke of, she most likely had personally witnessed.

Too terrifying...

This ‘Three Realms’ was far too terrifying!

“In addition, the Three Realms have many other races within them. The most powerful of those races, however, are the humans. The humans are the masters of the Three Realms,” the golden eye said. “Supposedly, it was Nuwa who created humans, and she doted dearly upon them. In addition... humans have a terrifying rate of growth as well as procreation. They gave birth to many powerful individuals, including many of their ‘Daofathers’.

Humans are the most powerful, have the most potential, and are publicly acknowledged as the masters of the Three Realms.”

“And this little invader...he is human!”

The golden eye stared death towards Ning.

“Human?”

The nine Elders stared at Ning as well. Previously, they had looked down upon him as they might look down upon a bug. They felt themselves to be wise and powerful; they hadn't held this puny little figure in any regard. But now, from what they had just learned...they realized that this puny little fellow, less than a tenth of a percent of their size...was actually one of terrifying masters of the Three Realms, a common enemy to the entire Infinite Land...a human!

“So this is a ‘human’?”

The nine Elders couldn't help but feel a sense of both dread and respect, because the race behind this alien invader was simply too terrifying.

“However...there is no need to worry about a little fellow like him,” the Queen Mother's voice rang out. “This is the Infinite Land, not the Three Realms. Those so-called Heavenly Daos of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, Earth, and the others...they are useless here. Only the most supreme of Daos, the Heavenly Dao of Primordial Chaos, is present here. The Dao of Primordial Chaos is the most exalted of Daos. Both the Infinite Land and the Three Realms were born from the primordial chaos...and anything born from the primordial chaos is subject to the Dao of Primordial Chaos. However...anyone capable of understanding the Dao of Primordial Chaos, even just a tiny part of it, would be considered one of the most supreme figures of the Three Realms. This little fellow shouldn't be that strong.”

“Right.” The nine Elders all nodded.

The Dao of Primordial Chaos...

They had heard of it before. It was the most exalted of Daos, the most powerful of Daos! If one could summon the limitless power of the Dao of Primordial Chaos, even the killing of Daofathers would be accomplished

with ease.

“Hear and obey,” the Queen Mother’s voice rang out, having grown deeper. “Fully activate the entire Third Void Sector. This human absolutely must not escape.”

“Send out all of the commando squads of the Third Void Sector to capture this human.”

“Send out the entire First Army of our border armies. This human must be captured!”

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

The nine Elders all assented with respect.

.....

“The Queen Mother commands the alien to be captured. We shall fully mobilize.” A horned, violet-caped warrior let out a bellow.

“For the Queen Mother!” The dense cluster of a thousand-plus black-caped warriors all called out in unison.

.....

“The Queen Mother commands that our First Army fully mobilize at once to capture this alien.” A horned warrior with an extremely powerful aura let out a roar. This horned warrior wore a golden cape which was covered with black tattoos at the base.

“For the Queen Mother!”

The group of horned, violet-caped warriors below him all called out with respect and ardor.

They immediately began to summon their squads and units. Soon, the most powerful army of the border armies, the First Army, flew out from the Infinite Land. They boarded their enormous spaceships and flew into the Void, towards the direction of Ji Ning.

.....

Within the darkness of the void.

Three powerful minds were communicating with each other, one of which was the Queen Mother who had just given the order.

“Elder sister, why have you awoken us?”

“It isn’t time for us to wake up yet.” The two other minds each released their own queries.

However, the mind of the Queen Mother said: “In the space around our Snaphorn world, a human has appeared.”

“A human?”

“What? A human?”

The two other terrifying minds instantly trembled. They would never be able to forget that terrifying war. The tremendous power of the human race had been completely engraved into their minds. Even though countless eras had passed since then...they could never forget. That had been a true nightmare. That terrifying entity had countless experts, and the humans were the most powerful of them. Those utterly enormous, so-called ‘formations’...those blazing infernos that had been birthed from the Solar Star...those staves, those trees, those swords, those weapons... they had exterminated countless individuals that the three of them had venerated. They all felt tremendously grateful for having been able to survive that great war.

Chapter 10: Grand Space Formation

“This human is still very weak, and I’ve already sent out the entire First Army of the border armies after him. Within the First Army, there are at least a few ‘Firstborn’. I’ll be able to see everything they experience and will be able to more closely inspect this human who has arrived,” the Queen Mother’s mind sent.

“Your actions are correct, elder sister.”

“Keep a close eye on this human.”

The Snaphorn world, in truth, was ruled over by these three Queen Mothers. They were the founders of this world; naturally, they vastly outstripped Ji Ning in power. However, they were wary of the humans which Ning represented, and so they didn’t dare to be the slightest bit arrogant.

These three Queen Mothers had, long ago, given birth to a group of children.

Their children had continued to give birth to children of their own...

And so, one generation after another, this continued...

The original source for all of the citizens of the Snaphorn world was this trio of Queen Mothers! Those who had been born from the Queen Mothers were known as the ‘Firstborn’, and they had the greatest potential. The children of the Firstborn were the Secondborn, and their potential was second only to that of the Firstborn. The children of the Secondborn were the Thirdborn, and so on and so forth.

For example, of the nine Elders in the Palace of Elders, eight were Firstborn while one was Thirdborn!

The Queen Mothers who had given birth to the Firstborn were able to know everything they experienced.

.....

Within a beautiful world of flowers.

Perhaps fate was indeed meddling in subtle ways, for just as Ji Ning encountered this new danger, the day of Yu Wei's Celestial Tribulation had begun.

"Disciple, you were very powerful in your past life, and in this life you accepted me as your master...which means that this Celestial Tribulation will be incomparably shocking in power. I'm not able to help you too much in dealing with this tribulation. All I can do is help guard you from outsiders. As for the tribulation itself...it'll be up to you." Lu Dongbin, his Immortal sword on his back, looked towards the black-robed Yu Wei.

"Your disciple understands," Yu Wei said respectfully.

"Go, then." Lu Dongbin nodded lightly.

Yu Wei immediately flew to the peak of a distant island mountain. As for Lu Dongbin, he continued to watch from his current location atop the peak of a nearby mountain. Lu Dongbin was in complete control of this minor world; it was his personal, secret abode. He had even set down layers of formations, ensuring that even True Gods or Daofathers who wished to barge in would have to spend a significant amount of effort.

The wind tribulation, the fire tribulation, the thunder tribulation, the demonheart tribulation...the four great tribulations of the Celestial Tribulation.

Yu Wei was indeed extremely powerful. She had been very powerful in her past life, and with Patriarch Lu's guidance in this life, she had reached an extremely high level of insight into the Dao. She was thus able to smoothly sail through the wind tribulation and the fire tribulation.

"Not good." The distant Lu Dongbin frowned slightly as he looked towards her. "Although the wind tribulation and the fire tribulation have both ended...both were clearly more formidable than the ones which most of the disciples under my command experienced. In fact...they were close in power to the wind tribulation and the fire tribulation which I myself experienced so long ago."

Lu Dongbin had been Emperor Eastflower in a past life; after he had

reincarnated and become Patriarch Lu, his tribulation had definitely not been a simple one!

Although he was a Ki Refiner, in the face of the thunder tribulation of his Celestial Tribulation...he inconceivably encountered nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation! However, Lu Dongbin had the benefit of a solid foundation provided by his past life. How could the soul of Emperor Eastflower be so easily dealt with? In addition, his master was a superb one, one of the truly supreme figures of the entire Three Realms. Thus... despite being a Ki Refiner, he had managed to force his way through the nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation.

By now, he had already reached the absolute peak of power possible for a Pure Yang True Immortal. He was publicly acclaimed within the Three Realms as the True Immortal with the highest chance of becoming a Daofather, and in fact he had already stepped halfway into the realm of becoming a Daofather.

“Judging from that wind tribulation and that fire tribulation...my disciple’s thunder tribulation probably won’t stop at six nine-sets.” Lu Dongbin frowned. “Her experiences in her past life were ordinary, and I’m the only master she’s taken on in this life. Normally speaking, most Ki Refiner disciples of Daofathers will only experience six nine-sets. Why in the world is her Celestial Tribulation this deadly?”

Lu Dongbin had always felt that this disciple of his had been hiding something. However, although he had even sought out Judge Cui and read her past life’s history within the Book of Life and Death, he had still been unable to uncover anything.

Still...his subconscious continued to tell him that something wasn’t quite right.

The power of a Celestial Tribulation was determined by the cosmos themselves; naturally, there had to be a reason behind all of this!

“In an hour, the thunder tribulation shall arrive.” Lu Dongbin no longer dwelled on the question, just watching quietly.

.....

The Nihilum Zone, beyond the Primordial Ruinworld. Ning was currently flying forward at high speed, continuing to pull away from that distant land. That earlier, sudden attack had caused him to feel that something was wrong...especially when those foes had claimed to be from the Snaphorn world and that this space region belonged to their Snaphorn world.

Ning instantly understood that these creatures must have come from the Primordial Ruinworld...and that he had been discovered.

Flee!

Flee at top speed!

The Primordial Ruinworld was a place which not even True Gods or Daofathers would dare trespass. Ning naturally wasn't willing to interact with the Primordial Ruinworld in any way.

Rumble...

Suddenly, layers of light began to appear within the formerly dark emptiness of the Void. It was a golden light. The Third Void Sector of the Nihilum Zone had nearly ten thousand bases within it which were connected to each other like nodes! Every single node was a critical point within an utterly enormous formation...and in an instant, an enormous net that spanned tens of millions of kilometers was instantly formed.

"But, but..." Ning was stunned by the sight before him.

His eyes were already blazing with torch-light. He had immediately used the [Torch Dragon's Eye] and hurriedly scanned his surroundings, but no matter where he looked, he saw the golden light seemingly stretch off to infinity. If he looked carefully enough, he could see countless patterns and ripples within the golden web, while the nodes were particularly eye-catching and brilliant.

"A grand sealing formation that covers many tens of millions of kilometers?" Ning mumbled to himself, "This is crazy. The entire Stillwater Commandery is only a few million kilometers in size."

A region of many tens of millions of kilometers in size was comparable

to a hundred ordinary commanderies of the Grand Xia world.

An utterly enormous formation like this truly was astonishing.

“It seems the power of this Snaphorn world is far beyond what the likes of myself can handle. What should I do? What should I do?” Ning instantly began to consider his next options. Although he was shocked by this enormous formation, Ning wasn’t an inexperienced bumpkin; for example, in the Crescent world, Patriarch Subhuti had secretly set up many enormous formations, some of which were able to cover an entire continent, which was equivalent to a third of the world of the Grand Xia. Those formations were far larger than the grand sealing formation before him.

And the Celestial Court!

The formations of the Celestial Court covered the entirety of the region they controlled.

There were many formations within the Three Realms that were far, far larger than this grand sealing formation! However...generally speaking, only Daofathers were capable of setting up those titanic formations! Most likely, not even Pure Yang True Immortals would be able to set them up, unless they were Pure Yang True Immortals who were extremely skilled in the art of formations, or supreme True Immortals like Lu Dongbin.

In addition, this enormous space formation was merely one of the defensive formations of this Snaphorn world; it probably didn’t represent the complete, full power of the Snaphorn world.

Still...its appearance was enough to cause Ning unease.

An individual capable of establishing this sort of enormous formation definitely wasn’t someone which the likes of Ning, who hadn’t even undergone the Celestial Tribulation yet, could overcome.

“And...aren’t the Heavenly Daos gone from this place? How, then, can formations be used?” Ning guessed, puzzled, “It seems I truly do know far, far too little about the Primordial Ruinworld.”

Indeed, Ning truly knew too little.

Of the ten Heavenly Daos, Primordial Chaos was the most supreme. Life and Destruction were matched, while Yin and Yang were also matched; these four were preceded only by Primordial Chaos. As for the Five Elements of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth, they served as the foundation for the entirety of the Three Realms...but they were on the third tier. Ning had an extremely deep level of insight into the Grand Dao of the Waterdrop, which was why he could vaguely sense the existence of the Heavenly Dao of Water, but here within the Nihilum Zone, he was completely unable to sense it...and so he had believed that the Heavenly Daos did not exist here!

In reality, however, only nine of the Heavenly Daos were missing from the Nihilum Zone of the Primordial Ruinworld. The Heavenly Dao of Primordial Chaos continued to exist; any place which was born from the primordial chaos was a place where the Heavenly Dao of Primordial Chaos would exist.

“No matter what...I need to give it a try.”

Swoosh!

Although Ning knew that it was unlikely that he would be able to break through this terrifying formation, he couldn't just give up and wait for death. He didn't want to be captured by the Snaphorn world.

The part of the net of light closest to Ning was merely a few million kilometers away. After using the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens], Ning's movement speed was extremely fast; it was a flying technique, after all, and once one used it to fly, one could rely on momentum and thusly limit the amount of divine power that was consumed. It wasn't like the [Starseizing Hand] or other divine abilities which consumed an enormous amount of divine power.

“Here I am.” Ning stared at the distant net of light, now only a few tens of thousands of kilometers away. The Rahu Bow appeared within his hands. He immediately nocked it, pulled it to a nearly full circle, circulated his divine power, then utilized [Houyi's Archery].

“Go!”

Light flashed around him, quickly passing through him to the bow, then condensing within the arrow.

At the same time...Ning filled all of his heartforce, now nearly at the peak of the 'iceheart' level, into the arrow.

Twang!

A brilliant, fiery red streak of light pierced through the heavens.

As the arrow flew forward, the light around it grew more and more dazzling, and its power grew greater and greater. In the end, it seemed to have transformed into an enormous, fiery red comet. Generally speaking, thanks to [Houyi's Archery], the farther the arrow flew, the more powerful it would become, until it reached peak power. Within the Three Realms, the usage of this technique would be even more incredible, because as the arrow flew it would constantly draw in the power of the natural world! Right now, since it was unable to do so, its power wasn't increasing at too ridiculous a rate.

Still...the power of this arrow had still surpassed that of Ning's close combat ability.

BOOM!

The fiery red comet struck against the net of light...and the net of light just rippled slightly, then turned calm once more. As for Ning's arrow, it had been knocked flying away.

"As I thought, I failed." Ning wasn't surprised at all. If he truly was able to pierce this terrifying sealing formation that was tens of millions of kilometers in size through using just a single arrow...only then would he be surprised! However...he truly didn't wish to accept this!

"What should I do?"

"All space within this region has been completely locked. There's no way for me to flee." Ning felt frantic inside. "The Youngflame clan really was quite vicious in sending me here."

The Primordial Ruinworld's Nihilum Zone was indeed an awe-

inspiringly famous danger zone. Not even many Empyrean Gods or True Immortals would be able to escape from it, much less the likes of Ji Ning.

As for the even more deadly Primordial Ruinworld...naturally, the Youngflame clan would've liked to send him to that place, but alas, even the Protocosmic spirit-treasure, the Worldhold Pagoda, was only able to tear open the fabric of space to send Ning into the Nihilum Zone. It was unable to send him to the Primordial Ruinworld.

"Eh?" Ning suddenly turned his head to look.

From far away, within the distant void of space, an enormous ship had suddenly appeared. This titanic ship was ten thousand kilometers long; it was like one of the continents of Earth! Earlier, it had been completely invisible, but now it had materialized out of nowhere. The entrance to the ship opened, and a series of massive, towering, blood-red horned, golden-eyed, black-caped warriors came flying out. The many warriors all radiated utterly astonishing auras.

"So the army of the Snaphorn world of the Primordial Ruinworld have arrived." Ning's pupils contracted.

Chapter 11: A Crisis of Divine Power

“Wait.” When Ji Ning saw the steady stream of black-caped warriors pour out from the distant ship, he couldn’t help but feel surprised. “The warriors I fought previously had scales, wings, and blood-red eyes. But now, we have some black-caped warriors in front of me...all of which have four arms, golden eyes, and blood-red horns. They look completely different from the earlier enemies; even their auras are far more powerful.”

If the ten foes Ning had previously slaughtered were adorable little kittens, then these black-caped warriors standing before him were like truly savage tigers!

“A total of over a thousand black-caped warriors.” After counting more than a thousand warriors flying out from the distant ship, Ning saw how, after a long moment passed, yet another warrior emerged from the ship. This one was dressed in a violet cape, but in all other respects, he looked identical to the black-caped warriors, save for the fact that there was an enormous difference in their auras of power.

“What a terrifying force.” Ning suddenly felt as though it was hard to breathe.

The violet-caped warrior took just a single step forward. His body blurred, then suddenly appeared before the thousand-plus black-caped warriors. This speed caused Ning’s eyes to twitch; even when he used his [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens] divine ability, he still wasn’t as fast as this person.

The invisible aura the person emanated caused Ning to feel even more pressure. “He’s definitely more powerful than any Celestial Immortal I’ve faced to date.”

“Commander.”

The thousand-plus black-caped warriors all looked towards their leader with eagerness.

The violet-caped warrior, however, gave Ning a curious glance. “An alien who looks like this and who is so small...I’ve never seen or even heard of someone like him.”

“What should I do? What should I do? What’s my next course of action?” Ning was feeling extraordinarily nervous right now. The entire region of many tens of kilometers was encompassed by this grand formation; there was nowhere for him to flee, and the army squad which the Snaphorn world had just sent out was terrifyingly strong.

“The voidwaves are being completely blocked out by the Third Void Sector’s defenses; no need to worry, everyone.” The violet-caped warrior smiled. “Release your children and capture this alien.”

“Yes!”

“Yes!”

“Yes!”

Instantly, a series of deafening roars rang out, shaking the region of space. At the same time, the thousand-plus black-caped warriors simultaneously opened their mouths. Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Ten small spheres flew out from each of their mouths, producing a total of more than ten thousand small spheres. These small spheres instantly expanded in size when they entered the space of the Void, and they quickly transformed into a series of scaled, winged, blood-eyed warriors of enormous size.

“They vomited them out?” Ning was completely flabbergasted.

“Children, capture this alien,” the violet-caped warrior ordered.

“Yes!”

The ten thousand-plus blood-eyed warriors all assented in unison...and then half of them, the shorter and smaller ones, all opened their own mouths and emitted soundless roars, causing an invisible ripple of power to instantly sweep towards Ning. Ning knew what was coming this time; he knew that these smaller blood-eyed warriors were skilled in

hypnotism. Last time, he had only faced five of them, but this time more than five thousand of them were simultaneously using the technique.

The formless ripples couldn't be avoided; all he could do was take them head-on!

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Ning could feel booms ring out from within his soul!

However...with his heartforce at nearly the peak of the iceheart stage, Ning was still able to survive.

"What a powerful soul." The violet-caped warrior nodded lightly.

"This alien really does have a bit of talent."

"Yes. Although our children are merely fairly weak cannon fodder meant to be used up during a battle...in large numbers, they are still quite dangerous. I wonder where this alien came from? He's quite strong."

The black-caped warriors were stealthily chatting amongst themselves.

.....

Since hypnotism had failed...the ten thousand-plus blood-eyed warriors pulled out their weapons, then all charged forward, filling the Void with their massive bodies.

These could be considered as having power that was just barely comparable to Void-level Fiendgods, but they didn't have Fiendgod-like indestructible bodies. If he used all his abilities, such as the [Starseizing Hand] or [Three Heads, Six Arms], Ning could wipe them all out in a very short period of time! After all, they didn't have regenerating bodies; killing them would be very easy, very simple. However...Ning didn't dare to recklessly waste his divine power.

The [Starseizing Hand] used up a vicious amount of divine power; once his divine power was exhausted, he would no longer be able to even fight back.

"I'll have to rely on swordplay."

Ning's two hands each held a Darknorth sword. He made the swords expand to nine hundred meters.

Swoosh!

He used the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens], instantly charging into the very center of that mass of blood-eyed warriors. Ning didn't use any additional divine abilities after that, relying solely on his sword-arts. Slash, slash, slash! Sword-light flashed everywhere.

Ning's sword-arts were unfathomably profound, far beyond what these blood-eyed warriors were capable of. The pair of nine hundred meter long Darknorth swords slashed through the air, chopping past the heads of the blood-eyed warriors, sometimes completely bisecting them in half!

All of the blood-eyed warriors died, unable to heal from their wounds, regardless of where the injuries were, head or waist.

"Eh? His sword-arts truly are profound." The violet-caped warrior was surprised by what he saw.

Ning was born to be a Sword Immortal. Even though he could no longer sense the Dao of the Sword or summon the natural energy of the world... his sword-arts remained unfathomable.

"Blaze, my children," the violet-caped warrior called out.

"Roaaaaaar!"

"Die!"

"Alien!"

The horde of blood-eyed warriors bellowed as their bodies began to glow with a blurry green light. Instantly, their speed and their strength rose dramatically. They began to assault Ning en masse.

Ning remained very calm. He didn't use any divine abilities; instead, he relied on his sword-arts to continue to slaughter these blood-eyed warriors. In fact, he even used his own body as a weapon, using it to block the enemy axes and whips head-on. Due to having trained in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], Ning was able to actually conserve power by using his

own body to take on blows as he fought within the mass of blood-eyed warriors!

Ning wasn't worried about them being able to injure him in the slightest.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Ning was occasionally sent flying here by an axe or flying there by a whip...

But each time he was sent 'flying', his sword-light would flash past in a graceful manner...and many enemy heads would go flying as well.

.....

Within the infinite darkness of the Void, three powerful minds were communicating with each other.

"This human's body is rather strong."

"Right. It's like one of those 'magic treasures' those humans use."

"This human is probably at the Celestial Immortal level of power at most...but his body is this powerful...he most likely must have trained in an earth-shatteringly powerful protective divine ability those humans have."

"Ideally, we shall capture him alive, so that we can analyze his body. If we can gain some insights into some of the profound mysteries behind his divine ability, then use them to make us sisters grow more physically powerful, that would be wonderful."

.....

By relying on the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] and his sword-arts, Ning was able to wipe out all of the blood-eyed warriors in the time needed to boil a kettle of tea. However, Ning didn't feel excited at all...because he saw the amusement on the faces of the distant black-caped warriors, and the calmness of the violet-caped warrior. He understood from this that to the Snaphorn world, the forces he had just killed most likely represented very little.

In truth...

They really did represent almost nothing. They were cannon fodder; in fact, they weren't even viewed as true members of the same race to which the horned warriors belonged! To produce a true member of the race required an extremely high price to be paid! Producing this sort of cannon fodder, however, was much easier and much cheaper. However, there was a limit to how many of them each horned warrior could control; some would have to perish before they could give birth to more.

"He was able to kill more than ten thousand of our children; he does have a bit of talent." The violet-caped warrior said, "Hellsong, go and test his abilities."

"Yes."

A black-caped warrior nodded, then manifested four shortswords in his four hands.

Ning's heart clenched.

They had just seen him kill more than ten thousand of those blood-eyed warriors...but still chose to send a single black-caped warrior to fight?

"Hmph." The black-caped warrior suddenly moved, transforming into a blur as he pounced towards Ning.

"So fast!" Ning was somewhat caught off-guard. Those earlier red-eyed warriors had been far slower than him, but this black-caped warrior was so fast that he was only slightly slower than Ning when using the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens]. He could already be considered as being on Ning's general level; he was slightly slower, but it wouldn't make much of a difference.

Four icy shortswords came plunging towards him.

Ning's Darknorth swords struck outwards as well.

Clang clang clang!

Consecutive collisions could be heard. Ning's advantage lay in the profoundness of his sword-arts, while the enemy's advantage was having four arms.

However, from that clash...

Ning was sent flying back!

“What great power.” Ning’s face changed, then his body blurred, transforming into his three-headed, six-armed form.

“Three heads and six arms? So is this your true form?” The black-caped warrior was quite surprised, but he then snickered, “Interesting.” He charged forth once more.

Ning now had six divine swords in his six arms. His sword-arts were profound, but he remained unwilling to use the [Starseizing Hand]. The [Starseizing Hand] simply used up far too much divine power, and the strength of this Snaphorn world was immeasurable. It was better to make himself appear weak; if he immediately revealed his trump cards, they would probably prepare even more powerful trump cards to deal with him.

Slash! Ning’s sword-light sliced through the black-caped warrior’s body. The black-caped warrior retreated at high speed, but a gaping wound was still cut through his chest. Green blood spewed outwards, but in the blink of an eye the wound was healed.

“Healed?” Ning was surprised. “So they really are two separate races. Those cannon fodders were completely unable to heal, but the black-caped warriors are capable of self-regeneration.”

Once someone became capable of self-regeneration, killing them would be much harder.

“Eh?” The violet-caped warrior saw what had just happened. “Hellsong’s unit, engage.”

Instantly, nine more black-caped warriors went flying forward.

“Hellsong, can’t you get it done?”

“You can’t even capture a single alien, and you even got injured.”

The nine other black-caped warriors all spoke teasingly, but they showed no mercy in their movements at all. They soon formed a complete

circle around Ning, attacking him en masse and giving him nowhere to flee at all.

Boom...

Ning's body suddenly increased explosively in size, expanding to three thousand meters.

Three thousand meters was Ning's limit in using the Heavenly Transformation technique.

"What?" Prior to this, those ten black-caped warriors were surrounding and assaulting a tiny little dot, but that tiny little dot had suddenly and explosively increased in size to become comparable to them; this caused them to feel completely flabbergasted.

"So this is how tall you actually are...I imagine this is your true form, right?" Hellsong sighed in amazement, "Three heads, six arms, and as tall as us...this alien is quite strong."

Ning, however, just felt misery; the more divine abilities he used, the faster his divine power would be used up.

However...while using Heavenly Transformation, his speed and strength would both increase tremendously!

"Every single one of these black-caped warriors are comparable to Celestial Immortal Goldclock or Deadwood; if any more come, I'll be forced to use the [Starseizing Hand]. Once I use it...my end will come shortly thereafter." Ning was frantic now; every bit of divine power that he used up was irreplaceable, at least in the short term. However...he still had no idea as to how he was supposed to flee from this place.

He could neither ascend to Heaven nor descend to Hell; there was nowhere to flee!

Chapter 12: No Way Out

After using the Heavenly Transformations technique and [Three Heads, Six Arms], Ji Ning's power had increased substantially. He was able to just barely fend off those ten black-caped warriors, but maintaining this state resulted in his divine power being continuously depleted.

"He's actually still able to hold on?" This caused the distant, violet-caped warrior to frown. He immediately ordered, "The entire squad, go and capture this alien!"

"Yes!"

Accompanied by a series of roars, a total of ninety massive black-caped warriors flew towards Ji Ning's direction. This caused Ning's face to instantly change. "They really are giving me no chance at all. A hundred Celestial Immortals...how am I supposed to withstand them?" Although all of these foes focused on close combat, meaning that only a number of them were able to engage with him at any given moment, they clearly had some sort of mysterious combination formation technique; the more warriors that joined, the more powerful each black-caped warrior grew.

"Senior bear, what should I do?" Ning asked frantically, "Are there any options? If I hide in the underwater estate, can I survive this tribulation?"

"It's useless." The giant yellow bear was both frantic and helpless. "If you hide inside the underwater estate, it will end up being exposed as well...although Loose Immortals and Celestial Immortals are unable to forcibly bind me, some truly powerful figures are still capable of it. I'm only a Protocosmic spirit-treasure, after all; the master of this so-called Snaphorn world has to be at least at the level of a Pure Yang True Immortal."

Ning felt misery in his heart.

Indeed.

Given that they were able to send out a squad of soldiers like this, as well as set up an enormous space formation that spanned tens of millions

of kilometers...it would be bizarre if the Snaphorn world's strongest experts were not at the Pure Yang True Immortal level! Anyone who reached that level could forcibly bind the Starseizing Manor.

"If I hide, I die...but if I don't hide, I still die!" Ning had no idea as to what he should do.

"All you can do is hope and pray that your master, Patriarch Subhuti, can find you," the giant yellow bear said. "Your master possesses the [Dream of the Three Realms]...but this place is outside the Three Realms. In fact, many of the Heavenly Daos don't exist here; only the Heavenly Dao of Primordial Chaos holds sway here. Your master might not be able to sense things here."

Ning was stunned.

His only hope was his master, Patriarch Subhuti! The Patriarch's power was utterly unearthly; at a time like this, only he might be capable of rescuing Ning. But...the giant yellow bear was right. This was the Nihilum Zone of the Primordial Ruinworld; even though Patriarch Subhuti was extremely powerful, if he was unable to find Ning, what could he do?

"Can it be that I, Ji Ning, am going to die here?" Ning felt an unwillingness to accept this within his heart. "Senior apprentice-sister took on Patriarch Lu as her master...and we agreed that we would meet again! Father, mother...I haven't even had a chance to see if their reincarnations are living happily or not. And Earth...I haven't gone back to Earth to take a look..."

He didn't want to accept this.

He truly didn't!

"If I had known this would happen, I would've left my Primaltwin at Swallow Mountain." Ning was filled with unbearable regret for having brought his Primaltwin with him as he fought the Youngflame clan. He had felt that as long as he had the underwater estate and Greater Teleportation Dao-seals, he would be able to escape without issues. Who would've imagined that the descent of karmic sinflames rendered him

incapable of escaping, resulting in him being sent into this danger zone?

“Can it be that my life truly is going to end here?”

The ninety black-caped warriors joined the ten earlier black-caped warriors into a formation. Instantly, their auras grew even more powerful as they continued to assault Ning.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

After just a few exchanges, the previously indestructible Ning suddenly blew apart! In fact, some of his flesh and blood transformed into dust from the blows of the enemy swords and sabers.

“What just happened?” The hundred attacking black-caped warriors were all amazed.

The distant commander shouted, “The Queen Mother commands you! Even if the alien is transformed into bits of mushmeat, you need to collect every single piece of flesh and blood; you can’t spare even a single bit of dust. He won’t die easily!”

“Yes.”

Instantly, the group of black-caped warriors became filled with eagerness. The Queen Mother had personally given them an order! They felt incomparably honored. They sent their minds sweeping forth through space. They wouldn’t let even a hint of dust escape their senses.

“Damn.”

Whoosh.

Far away, a human rematerialized; it was Ning, his eyes bloodshot. His [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] wasn’t something these Celestial Immortals could breach; just now, he had voluntarily caused his divine body to detonate while focusing all of his divine power within a single piece of flesh. Through the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], he had then transformed that piece of flesh into a speck of dust.

Alas...it seemed as though the enemy knew what abilities he had available. They didn’t want to give him any chance at all.

“He really didn’t die.”

“He was blown up into tiny bits but didn’t die?”

“When our cores are broken, we’ll die...but he was blown into tiny bits and remained alive? This is too terrifying.” The black-caped warriors quietly sent messages to each other; clearly, they were all quite stunned. Whether it was Ning’s unbreakable body or the fact that he stayed alive even after being blown apart...they were truly stunned and uneasy.

What a terrifying race this was!

.....

“Senior apprentice-sister, your junior apprentice-brother was unable to live up to his promise!”

“Father, mother...”

“Master...”

One image after another flashed through Ning’s mind.

That senior apprentice-sister of his, who had kept everything hidden with her heart for so long, but who had eventually become his Dao-companion within the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, under the watchful gazes of countless people.

That seemingly cold but actually warm-hearted master of his, Immortal Diancai.

His teacher, Subhuti, who gazed down upon the Three Realms from his lofty, exalted position.

And his ordinary parents...they had done everything for him, and had chosen to forget about revenge, so that their son might have a better chance of living a good life...

His junior apprentice-brother...his sister, Autumn Leaf...Uncle White... Little Qing...

“Farewell!”

In dying here, not even reincarnation would be possible.

“Farewell, my loved ones.” Ning stared at the hundred black-caped warriors charging towards him, as well as the even more numerous foes in the distance. His eyes actually turned calm, a calmness that transcended both blazing rage and freezing coldness. It was a sort of absolute calmness...a perfect mastery of the self.

In this instant...Ning’s heartforce was actually able to leap from the peak of the ‘iceheart’ level all the way to the third level, the ‘ruler’ level. Even amongst the divine archers of the Three Realms, he would now be considered an absolute top-tier expert.

But alas, heartforce was invisible and formless; it wasn’t able to help out Ning at this moment.

“You want me to die?” Ning said softly, “Then I’ll make you all die!” These were words from his homeland; the foes before him were completely unable to understand it.

The six divine swords suddenly vanished.

“His swords vanished?”

“What’s going on?”

The hundred black-caped warriors charging towards Ning all halted. They could tell that Ning was skilled in using the sword, but despite being such a powerful swordsman, he had...actually put away his swords?

Was he giving himself up for capture?

BOOM!

Ning’s fingers formed sword-fingers. They suddenly expanded to be more than nine hundred meters long as the full power of the Fourth Cycle of the [Starseizing Hand] exploded forth. Ning’s power instantly rose to an utterly terrifying level; he was actually able to knock an enemy shuttle aside, then with a slashing sound, pierce straight into the chest of a black-caped warrior. With a simple flick of his sword-fingers, the warrior was cut in half.

“What?” The distant violet-caped warrior’s face completely changed.

“How did his power increase this much?!”

Whoosh!

Crunch!

Slash!

Ning ignored all enemy assaults; his body, protected by the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], was completely capable of withstanding any assaults. The only attacks he needed to defend against were the ones that were meant to bind him! In the Three Realms, there were some powerful magic treasures that had powerful binding forces that were hard to defend against, but these warriors of the Snaphorn world were only skilled in close combat; thus, the only tools they had for binding an opponent were simple ones like chains or whips. Ning was less than two meters tall; he was able to dodge with incomparable nimbleness through the many massive black-caped warriors, making it hard for them capture him.

The black-caped warriors seemed strong, but their bodies were still unable to withstand Ning’s sword! Thus, they were easily chopped apart in close combat.

“...He died?” Ning was suddenly startled.

Through cutting, chopping, decapitating, or other strikes, he was able to neutralize twenty-five of the black-caped warriors within a short period of time. However, they all healed quite quickly...but the twenty-sixth actually lost its entire aura. It had completely, truly died.

Ning instantly thought back to what had just happened. “Right. That green sphere.”

All of the black-caped warriors had a green sphere within their bodies. Ning had originally thought that the green spheres were nothing more than organs. They were very small; the warriors were three thousand meters tall, while the green sphere was merely three meters long. He hadn’t damaged the green sphere in killing the first twenty-five warriors, but he had in the last one.

Boom!

Slash!

The black-caped warriors watched as the tiny little Ji Ning's sword-fingers suddenly expanded to become a thousand meters long. The sword-fingers tore through their bodies, plunging through their chest to snatch at and claw apart their cores. One black-caped warrior after another began to fall, and a large amount of baleful auras began to flood towards Ning, swirling into him.

"Careful, he's discovered our cores!"

"He knows about the cores!"

"His fingers are extremely terrifying, far more so than his swords."

"Our weapons are completely unable to block him."

"His body is completely unbreakable."

"He's too tiny; there's no way we can use our chains to capture him."

The black-caped warriors were actually on the losing side now.

The Celestial Immortals of the Three Realms could've joined forces and used various binding techniques to capture Ning from far away...but these aliens were only skilled in close combat! Although they had battle formations that could be used to kill him, the Queen Mother had commanded that they capture this person alive. Thus, they didn't dare unleash their most powerful killing techniques for fear of killing him.

"Hmph." The distant violet-caped warrior's face sank when he saw this. He could tell that there were only two methods for dealing with this tiny little alien.

The first method was to use formation-based killing techniques, like the ones they used in their planetary wars, to forcibly crush the foe. However, if they did that, they might accidentally kill this alien, which would be a violation of the Queen Mother's command. The Queen Mother's decree was very important; in comparison, even the destruction of their entire army meant nothing.

The second method was to fight him personally, or perhaps with several

supporters! To overcome him with absolute strength, then capture him.

“Out of the way.” The violet-caped warrior transformed into a violet streak of light.

“He’s coming.” This entire time, Ning had kept part of his attention on the violet-caped warrior, who was the person who truly caused Ning to feel threatened. Now that the violet-caped warrior was charging forward at full speed, Ning’s heart instantly clenched. This speed was even faster than the speed which he had displayed earlier; it was absolutely superior to Ning when using the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens].

“Is this my final battle before I die?” Ning didn’t feel any fear; his gaze was incomparably calm as he stared at the violet-caped warrior. “If I die... I’ll drag you down into death with me!”

Chapter 13: Our World

As the violet-caped warrior attacked, the many black-caped warriors that had been assaulting Ji Ning all retreated. They were all filled with utter confidence in their commander.

Whoosh!

A silvery-white whip lashed out, more than thirty thousand meters long. It was like a giant, silvery-white serpent that was coiling with elegance and poise as it swept towards Ning. Ning's sword-fingers struck out like swords, blocking the whip head-on. WHAP! A clear ringing sound rang out. Ning could sense a strange energy be transmitted into his body, including into his organs. Fortunately, the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] refined the entire body, resulting in no weaknesses at all. However, Ning was still knocked flying backwards by several kilometers.

"His speed vastly outstrips mine, and the power of his whip is on a level higher than even me using the [Starseizing Hand] at full power. His whip is used in a way that gives me no way to dodge; it seems he is at an even higher level with his whip than I am with sword-arts. His power, without any question, is at the utmost peak of power possible for a Celestial Immortal," Ning mused to himself.

Hard to deal with!

The black-caped warriors were merely at the level of Celestial Immortals Deadwood or Goldclock, but this violet-caped warrior was far more powerful than even Celestial Immortal Infatuation! Even the [Starseizing Hand], Ning's proudest technique, was insufficient in the face of this foe. As for speed and sword-arts, Ning was clearly inferior in these regards as well.

Fortunately, only close combat was possible within the Nihilum Zone, which was why his [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] was able to be used to maximum effect. Within the Three Realms, Celestial Immortals on the level of this violet-caped warrior would probably be very close to Pure Yang True Immortals in power...their magic artifacts and formations

alone would be enough to make Ning feel hopeless. However, in this place, only close combat was possible; thus, he still had a hint of a chance.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Ning used both the [Three Heads, Six Arms] and the [Starseizing Hand] simultaneously. As for the violet-caped warrior, his four arms clutched four silver whips which struck out long long serpents, wildly assaulting Ning.

Ning's six arms strove mightily to defend.

In fact, every so often he would borrow the force of the collision to flee and dodge. Ning had been continuously searching for a way out, for a chance to counter-attack.

"I'm being completely suppressed by him. There's no way for me to even go close to him. What should I do?" Ning was frantically pondering what to do. The foe's long silver whip was rendering him incapable of drawing within fifteen thousand meters of the man, much less wound him.

.....

"He clearly is using some sort of technique that allows him to increase his strength dramatically." The violet-caped warrior, by contrast, was much more relaxed; he was in complete control of this fight. "Only his arms are capable of releasing such power; his legs and kicks are far weaker. I trust that there is a price to this ability; he shouldn't be able to maintain it for too long."

All things came at a cost.

For a human that was less than two meters tall to become the size of a three thousand meter Fiendgod came at a cost, and so too did having three heads and six arms. The cost of using the [Starseizing Hand] was even higher.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The four long silver whips danced out like dragons, wildly lashing out at Ning again and again. Ning had to completely focus on defending them at all times. If he failed a single time...the whips would probably entangle

him and completely bind him.

If the whips attacked quickly, Ning had to block quickly as well.

His six arms strove to defend as best they could. The more times they blocked, however, the more times he had to use the [Starseizing Hand], which meant the more divine power would be used up.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

His divine power was frantically depleting. Even though he had reached the sixteenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], the Fourth Cycle of the [Starseizing Hand] used up so much divine power than in just a short period of time, more than half of Ning's divine power had been used up. He hadn't used up nearly as much in the earlier fight, despite it lasting much longer.

"Less than a third."

"Less than a sixth."

He was faced with the whip-strikes which came from every direction. Ning seemed to have become trapped within a net of whip-strikes; he was unable to dodge, and his only option was to block, resulting in his divine power depleting further and further.

When his divine power was completely used up...Ning would be completely subdued and captured.

.....

Within the underwater estate. Within an undefined, void-like region.

The giant yellow bear was here. Next to him were seven figures, including a child with a necklace, a bald elder, a beautiful woman...

The seven figures all emanated incomparably powerful auras, and amongst them was the red-haired Fiendgod which Ning had previously battled.

"Big bear, the young master is in a crisis in the outside world. Are we supposed to just wait here and watch?" The beautiful woman, dressed in black leather armor, spoke out with a frown. Her eyebrows were snow-

white, while her eyes looked just like a viper's.

"I watched as this little kid, Ji Ning, grew up step by step. Do you think I care about him less than you lot do?" The giant yellow bear said angrily, "I'm under instructions from Master to find a successor for him. Ji Ning is the best successor yet; I wouldn't dare be careless!"

"But you are letting him remain trapped in a dire situation!" The black-armored, beautiful woman said angrily.

"Do you seven think that you can protect him?" The giant yellow bear asked angrily. "Do you know who he has run afoul of this time? Foes from the Snaphorn world of the Primordial Ruinworld. The Primordial Ruinworld! They are one of remnant forces left behind from that ancient war! Anyone capable of controlling an entire world has most likely survived from that war, and anyone capable of surviving that war...even if they are weak, they can't be too weak. They might be at the level of a Daofather or a True God! Even if you all go out to rescue him, do you really think you can block a Daofather or a True God?"

The black-armored woman turned silent.

"Snow Scorpion." The red-haired Fiendgod spoke out, "The big bear is right. Even if we intervene, we might not be able to overcome this Snaphorn world."

"Big bear, you idiot...why didn't you notify us when Ji Ning was faced with the descent of karmic sinflames?" The black-armored woman couldn't help but berate him.

"Am I supposed to have you intervene whenever he encounters danger?" The giant yellow bear said angrily, "Per Master's orders, until he becomes an Empyrean God, he can't be truly considered Master's disciple. No matter what sort of trials he has to endure, they can only be considered tests for him...and if he fails and dies, he has no one to blame but his lack of skills or his bad luck. Although we all like him and view him as having tremendous potential and a very good chance of becoming an Empyrean God...how was I supposed to know that the Youngflame clan had an ability like this, to teleport him straight into the Nihilum Zone of the

Primordial Ruinworld? I thought that even if things did turn dangerous, we'd still be able to rescue him, which is why I let him face dangers as needed to temper him...but how can everything in life go as expected?! Ugh!"

"Let's take Ji Ning into the underwater estate and hide him within our world. Even if the enemy binds the underwater estate, it'll only be an elementary binding; they probably won't be able to find our world," the beautiful woman, Snow Scorpion, said.

"They might not find it...but it's also possible that they might find it." The bald elder suddenly spoke out in a hoarse voice.

The underwater estate did indeed have many secrets.

Immortal Juhua had always felt that there were secrets present within it. Ning had also felt that there were parts of the underwater estate that were not under his control...but he wasn't able to find those parts!

But just because Ning wasn't able to find them...didn't mean that the master of the Snaphorn world wouldn't be able to find out!

The red-haired man said in a gravelly voice, "No matter what...if Ji Ning dies, the Starseizing Manor will fall into the hands of the master of the Snaphorn world. If the master of the Snaphorn world is at the level of a True God or Daofather, he will definitely be able to find our world through the Starseizing Manor...at which point, our only option will be to fight with him. If the Snaphorn world's master is not yet at the True God or Daofather level, then he won't be able to defeat the formation which protects our world."

"Since, no matter what, we will still have to end up fighting with the master of the Snaphorn world...we might as well rescue Ji Ning and bring him into our world. Although the Godking did indeed say that his disciple could only enter our world after becoming an Empyrean God, we are left with no other options."

"Right." The giant yellow bear nodded. "Since we can't escape...we are indeed left with no other options. Make your preparations. Once we bring Ji Ning into our world, we'll need to be ready for the Snaphorn world's

attack. I hope their master is weak; ideally, he won't even be able to find our world."

"Right."

"Let's prepare."

The seven figures all had solemn looks on their faces.

The child, who had remained silent this entire time, suddenly spoke out: "Long ago, Father instructed us to leave him and stay out of that war. We've been waiting long enough...and so let's have a good fight with the Snaphorn world."

"Let's have a good fight."

"Let's fight!"

Everyone present had flames of war within their eyes.

.....

Within the emptiness of the Nihilum Zone. Enormous ships that were ten thousand kilometers long moved like streaks of light, advancing at high speed. The giant spaceships were tightly clustered together...and there seemed to be no end of them. Within the center of those giant ships, there was a golden warship.

Within the golden warship.

Everyone present was standing at solemn attention. Leading them was a horned warrior with a golden cape with black trimmings, and behind him were eight hundred violet-caped warriors. These were the most valiant, most capable commanders of the First Army who often engaged in wars against other worlds.

In front of them hovered an utterly enormous mirror. The images within the mirror were images of the commando squad of the Third Void Sector doing battle against Ji Ning.

"Benair is actually joining the fight in person." The golden-caped warrior snorted angrily, "How despicable. Since he's joining the fight in person...doesn't that mean our First Army has made this trip for

nothing?”

“This alien is quite tenacious and strong; he might be able to stay alive until we get there.”

“This is on the orders of the Queen Mother. It should be us, the First Army, who captures this alien.”

The almighty First Army...how could it possibly hold a small squad of the Third Void Sector in any regard?

“Quick, quick, quick!”

The general couldn't help but urge them to move faster. “It has to be us that captures this alien!” It was rare for the Queen Mother to give an order; they naturally had to work hard to show their talents.

.....

Within the void of the underwater estate.

“Ji Ning's divine power has almost been completely used up. Once it is used up, he'll fall into enemy hands. Red-hair, you personally intervene and wipe them all out, then return to our world and prepare to deal with the master of the Snaphorn world,” the giant yellow bear said.

“Alright.”

“Agreed.”

They all nodded in concurrence.

They all knew very well that falling into dire straits would truly temper one's Dao-heart. However...they had no idea that Ning's heartforce had already advanced from the second level, 'iceheart', into the third level, 'ruler'.

.....

Within the empty space of the Nihilum Zone. A tight cluster of black-caped warriors watched from not too far away as their commander, the violet-caped warrior, was completely dominating this alien.

“I'm almost done. I have less than a tenth of my divine power now.”

Ning didn't want to accept this. He truly didn't. But...the serpentine whips were striking out against him from every direction.

Was he truly out of options?

Chapter 14: Heartforce Manifests

“Hmph.” The violet-caped commander could sense the alien growing frantic; he could sense that this was, perhaps, the last throes of his enemy’s resistance. “It seems...he can no longer hold on.”

“Die!”

Ning suddenly let out an enraged roar.

He no longer held back at all on his divine power. Instead, he wildly poured it all into his arms at full force! The Void-level elemental ki in his body, through a secret art, was also immediately pushed into his arms. In this moment, Ning had only a single thought in his mind...no matter the cost, he was going to unleash his power to the maximum possible level.

Actually...even going all-out like this only resulted in a 30% increase in power.

“BREAK!”

Ning’s six arms struck out as six streaks of sword-light.

Ning’s calm eyes glowed with light, the light that came in the final instants of one’s life as it all blazed away. Ning’s heart and soul was completely poured into his swords.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Simultaneous explosions rang out.

Ning’s six sword-fingers stabbed out, four of them striking against the four silver whips. With explosive sounds, the silver whips...were actually knocked flying backwards. Ning’s fingers, however, continued to stab forward!

“What?!” The violet-caped commander’s eyes turned completely round. “How can this be?”

“Impossible!”

The many black-caped warriors watching from far away were amazed at this sight. They could all sense that Ning was inches away from death.

Previously, he had been completely suppressed...so how was it that right now, at the very end, he was actually able to unleash power that surpassed the power of their commander, knocking his weapon away?

.....

“What...how can this be?” Within the void-like region within the underwater estate, the giant yellow bear, who had been watching the battle outside this entire time, was completely surprised.

The giant yellow bear was most likely the person with the deepest understanding of Ning’s power.

He knew exactly what Ning was capable of. What Ning had displayed earlier represented his utmost limit of power; even if Ning went all out, he would at most be able to increase his power by 20% or 30%; he would still be considerably weaker than that violet-caped commander. How was it, then, that he had suddenly knocked the silver whip away?

“How can this be?”

“It doesn’t make sense.”

“It...shouldn’t have happened.” The giant yellow bear couldn’t understand it. “This isn’t the Three Realms. There’s no way to sense the Dao here, so even if he suddenly gained a new insight into the Dao, it wouldn’t help him increase his power in any way. In addition, he is currently in a battle, and he’s used up an enormous amount of divine power. There’s no way he could’ve broken into the seventeenth level of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] so soon...he just made it to the sixteenth level a short while ago.”

A breakthrough in his divine body? Impossible.

A breakthrough in the Dao? It wouldn’t make any difference.

The [Starseizing Hand] was already at the Fourth Cycle!

“How can this be?” The giant yellow bear didn’t understand.

.....

Not too far away, inside the golden warship of the First Army which

was ensconced within those countless warships. The commanders of the First Army were staring at the images within the levitating mirror.

“Eh?!”

“Odd.”

“What just happened? What ability did this alien just use?”

None of them understood it.

The golden-caped general, however, just laughed loudly. “Wonderful. The longer he can delay, the better; we’re almost there! Haha...it seems that in the end, it will still be us who captures this alien.”

.....

The experts of the Snaphorn world couldn’t understand it. Not even the giant yellow bear understood it. Nobody could think of a reason why this had just happened.

But within the deep, dark reaches of the Void...

Three minds were communicating with each other.

“Second sister...what just happened?”

“Elder sister, what happened?”

The three Queen Mothers had given birth to many children; their children were the Firstborn! More than half of the commanders of the First Army were Firstborn; the three Queen Mothers could see and sense everything the Firstborn could see and sense! Thus, they too saw everything which had just happened.

The commander of the commando squad from the Third Void Sector, Benair, was the child of the second Queen Mother of the three Queen Mothers. When Benair fought with Ning, it was as though the second Queen Mother had personally fought against Ning.

“That was...”

“Heartforce?”

“Yes, heartforce! It was heartforce!” The second Queen Mother’s

powerful mind suddenly began to tremble with excitement. “This human’s attack just now was actually filled with heartforce!”

“What? Heartforce?!”

“Heartforce?! He’s actually in control of heartforce?!”

The first and third Queen Mothers were both excited as well.

“Yes. There’s no mistaking it; in fact, just now I completely focused a strand of my mind upon my child Benair.” The second Queen Mother said excitedly, “They just clashed again. There’s no mistaking it; this human’s attacks contain heartforce within them. His control over his heartforce isn’t perfect; it’s clearly quite rough. However, I can still sense the powerful, mysterious, profound heartforce at work.”

“This is our chance!” The second Queen Mother was incomparably excited. “This human is able to focus his heartforce and knows how to apply it! That means he understands a heartforce technique! This is a truly supreme form of power; we can discover and distill the method for producing and applying heartforce from this human!”

“Right. Now we can gain a heartforce technique!”

“Yes, this is our chance!”

The other two Queen Mothers were incomparably excited as well.

They had experienced and survived that calamitous war; as survivors, they knew quite well that ‘heartforce’ was one of the truly supreme forms of power. Upon mastering heartforce, one could truly embark upon a path that would lead to them becoming the most supreme of existences within the primordial chaos! A path that led to surpassing even True Gods and Daofathers!

“This is our chance, but we cannot be rash.” The first Queen Mother’s mind warned the other two minds, “Heartforce techniques are supreme techniques that are absolutely not taught to outsiders, even within the Three Realms. This human youth must have an extraordinary background, which is why he was able to learn a technique like this. Perhaps there is a self-destruction mechanism hidden within his soul.”

“Actually...the simplest method is to hypnotize him, but he is one of those ‘Fiendgod Body Refiner’ humans; his soul and his body are completely merged together and extremely stable. In addition, he’s also a practitioner of heartforce; his mind must be very powerful. To hypnotize him...I imagine it will be quite difficult.”

“We have to try.”

Heartforce was far too alluring to them!

Heartforce...

It was an invisible, formless sort of power. It wasn’t like divine power, elemental ki, or natural energy; those could be seen with the naked eye. Heartforce, however, was incredibly powerful, and it was extremely hard to reach a basic level of skill in it. Back on Mount Innerheart, Ning had already been at a very high level of insight into the Dao, but he still had to train archery painstakingly for three years before finally reaching a basic level of skill.

However, heartforce truly was formidable. That mighty divinity of the Primordial Era, Houyi, had relied the power of his heartforce to become the number one divine archer of the Three Realms, and even Daofathers and True Gods had fallen to his hand.

Even Ning himself was surprised; his sword-finger had actually become so powerful as to suppress the whip of this violet-caped commander?

“Is this...heartforce?” Others might have to guess at it, but Ning himself knew very well that his incredibly berserk attack just now had been launched without any extraneous thoughts. All of his power had been fully merged into that blow...and his heartforce had unconsciously leaked into it as well.

How should heartforce be applied? This was a mystery.

The Three Realms had a set of extremely detailed instructions for applying heartforce through archery; this was the creation of the mighty divinity Houyi! It was precisely because mighty Houyi had systemized the method of using heartforce in archery that the Three Realms had so

quickly developed a crop of terrifyingly powerful divine archers...but there were no systemized tools for teaching one how to apply heartforce into other weapons.

How to apply heartforce to the sword?

To the saber?

To the spear?

To the staff?

If heartforce was applied to these weapons, would they increase in power dramatically? Since it worked for archery, it logically should work for these weapons...but mighty Houyi was the foremost expert of heartforce within the Three Realms, and his greatest talent was archery. He had thus created a systemized method for applying it to archery...but as for other weapons? Perhaps some other major powers had discovered ways of applying heartforce to those weapons, but those ways were crude ways, not systemized ways which others could use.

"I actually managed to apply heartforce through my fingers when I used sword-arts?" Ning was completely amazed.

The power of an ordinary arrow was quite ordinary...but when heartforce was applied to it, it would instantly turn into a nightmare for foes! The power of the arrow would instantly rise to a terrifying level.

"However...just now, I was only able to truly apply a very tiny amount of heartforce." Ning knew this for certain because he had used up only a very small amount of his heartforce; the rest of his heartforce remained untouched! As someone who had reached the third level of heartforce, 'ruler', Ning's heartforce was tremendously powerful. Even just a tiny amount of it was enough to cause the power of his sword-arts to rise to a level where he could actually now suppress this foe.

"Alien, you actually still have more tricks up your sleeve? I want to see how powerful you actually are!" The violet-caped commander let out a loud shout, then lashed out with a whip once more. As for the mind of the second Queen Mother, it had completely descended onto the commander

by now.

“Go.” Ning stretched out a single hand as well. His fingers flicked out!

His heartforce once more rode with his fingers, just as it had last time. Ning could sense that a small part of his heartforce had indeed become one with his fingers!

Bang! Ning’s fingers, now many hundreds of meters long, collided with that whip!

The whip was once more knocked flying back.

“Right. That’s the feeling.” Ning was beginning to vaguely make out the basics to it. However, he was still far, far away from being able to apply it as intricately as when he applied it to archery. All Ning could do was ponder the method of applying heartforce to archery, then try and come up with a similar way to strengthen his sword-fingers.

“Eh?” Ning suddenly realized that the distant, violet-caped commander had actually come to a halt.

Rumble...

A powerful ripple spread out. Ning took a look...and saw, far away in the void, one enormous spaceship after another coming flying towards him. There seemed to be no end to the densely clustered spaceships.

“...How many ships just arrived?” Ning was completely shocked.

The entrances to the ships all opened, and countless horned warriors came flooding out from them. Amongst these countless warriors were many black-caped warriors as well!

Ning swept them with his gaze. The number of ordinary horned warriors...they had to at least number in the millions. In addition, at the front of the many ships was a golden warship, from which one violet-caped warrior after another came flying out. At the very end, a gold-caped person came walking out, his aura so powerful and terrifying as to cause Ning to feel despair.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Suddenly, a series of thoughts descended upon the region.

The three Queen Mothers had sent out hundreds of thought-rays to the many violet-caped warriors, as well as the general.

“Don’t be in a hurry to attack.” The Queen Mother’s voice echoed within the general’s mind.

“Yes, Queen Mother,” the general replied mentally.

.....

“Big bear, what’s going on outside? Can it be that the young master’s divine power hasn’t been used up yet? I think we should make our move now. Let’s not waste any time.” Within the underwater estate, the black-haired beauty, ‘Snow Scorpion’, spoke out.

Chapter 15: Yu Wei's Tribulation

Red-hair, Snow Scorpion, and the others all looked towards the giant yellow bear. Only the big bear was able to clearly sense the outside world and what was going happening there.

“Don’t be impatient.” The big bear shook his head. “A powerful army has been dispatched from the Snaphorn world, but the strange thing is... this powerful army hasn’t acted against Ji Ning yet. In fact...even the violet-caped warrior that had been previously fighting against Ning has stopped fighting as fiercely as he had before. Ji Ning definitely doesn’t have much divine power left; if they fight for just a bit longer, his divine power will have been completely used up, but they actually halted. How odd.”

“Halted?”

The seven mighty warriors left behind by Daoist Threelives were all puzzled.

“In addition...there’s something else odd. Ji Ning’s power had clearly reached a limit...but just now, when he used the [Starseizing Hand], his power actually increased yet again. He was able to knock aside the foe’s weapon...and I don’t understand why, no matter how hard I try,” the giant yellow bear said.

“How can one’s power increase in the Nihilum Zone?” The seven began to ponder.

They were different from the giant yellow bear; the bear was, after all, just the spirit of a magic treasure. Only after the destruction of Pangu’s Primordial World had the giant yellow bear slowly trained to the level of becoming a true living creature. By comparison, he wasn’t that experienced...but the other seven had been quite famous long ago in Pangu’s World. This fame came through their performances in many battles; they had much greater experience and knew far more things.

“Can it be...” The seven suddenly all thought of the same possibility.

.....

Ning stared at the distant, awe-inspiring army of millions of horned warriors. He had a feeling...that even the most ordinary of warriors in that army was far more powerful than the red-eyed warriors he had previously battled. Most likely, all of them were comparable to Loose Immortals who had lived for a million years. They could be compared to the weakest of Celestial Immortals; Ning would be able to kill each of them with ease.

But no matter how ordinary they were in terms of strength...a million of them was an utterly terrifying prospect!

“So many warriors...if they have some sort of combination-formation technique, even Empyrean Gods or True Immortals would probably feel despair and choose to flee,” Ning mused to himself. “And this is just part of the total strength of the Snaphorn world of the Primordial Ruinworld. The Primordial Ruinworld...it truly is the most terrifying place of all.”

Ning was actually quite calm now.

The enemy held all the cards in their hands. They were simply too powerful...and more than eight hundred violet-caped warriors had suddenly appeared just now! If they were all comparable in strength to the first violet-caped warrior, that meant they were equivalent to a force of eight hundred supreme Celestial Immortals. And there was that gold-caped bastard...a person which caused Ning to feel completely powerless and unable to fight back when he looked at him.

“However...although I have no way of fighting back, I can still kill myself,” Ning mused to himself. “I definitely won’t let them do anything to me.”

“Alien.”

The general smiled as he moved forward, but even when his black, scale-covered face was smiling, it still looked absolutely savage. “This space belongs to our Snaphorn world. Why have you come to our place?”

“I was wandering through the infinite Void and entered this place by

accident,” Ning said. At the same time, he seized this chance to absorb more power from the Solar Star and the Lunar Star, converting it into divine power. He had used up far too much divine power earlier. “I truly do not wish to be enemies with you. I would like to ask you to please let me leave; I will be endlessly grateful if you do.”

“Let you leave? That’s not impossible,” the general suddenly said.

“Oh?” Ning looked at his foes. He knew, however, that the cost of activating such an enormous space formation that was tens of millions of kilometers in size was definitely an enormous one. And now, they had sent over so many Snaphorn warriors as well? There was no way they’d let him leave so easily.

“I have a request. If you accept, then I promise to let you leave,” the general said.

“Might I ask what this request is?” Ning asked.

“As long as you allow us to inspect your soul,” the general said, “And let us know your true intentions...if you are not a foe to our Snaphorn world, we shall immediately let you leave.”

“Inspect my soul? Soulsourcing?” Ning’s face changed.

He immediately understood what they were plotting.

He was a Fiendgod Body Refiner; his divine soul and his divine body were completely merged together, making his soul extremely stable, far more stable than the souls of many Celestial Immortals! In addition, his heartforce had reached the ‘ruler’ level...

It must be understood that it was difficult for Pure Yang True Immortals to forcibly soulsour even an ordinary Celestial Immortal. Someone like Ning, who had such powerful heartforce, was rare even amongst True Immortals and Empyrean Gods. To forcibly soulsour him was incredibly difficult. Even if a Daofather was to attempt it, Ning would still probably be able to instantly react and commit suicide by shattering his own soul!

So they wanted him to allow them to soulsour him without resisting?

“Not a chance.” Ning shook his head in refusal.

“Don’t be in such a hurry to refuse.” The golden-caped general continued to smile.

Ning, however, knew the truth. Given that his foes had sent out so many warriors and activated such an enormous space formation, they definitely were looking for something important. If he didn’t fight back, they could use some sort of technique to dominate and control his soul, resulting in him becoming a slave. That would truly be a life worse than death. After all, the promises these people were making...weren’t worth a single copper. This place was outside the Three Realms; there were no such things as oaths to the Dao of the Heavens.

“No need to say anything further.” Ning laughed coldly. “If push comes to shove, I’ll die. Soulscur me? In your dreams!”

“Alas.” The gold-caped general let out a sigh.

Whoosh...

Silently and soundless, hundreds of mind-strands simultaneously flew out from the gold-caped general and the hundreds of violet-caped warriors, all assaulting Ning!

Rumble...

Instantly, a sensation of utter exhaustion began to overwhelm Ning.

Tired.

So tired.

He felt like he was a mortal on Earth again, sick and tired and exhausted. He felt a desire to immediately shut his eyes...a sensation that he had never felt in this life after he had embarked onto the path of Immortal cultivation.

“I...am the only ruler of myself.”

The power of heartforce filled his entire body.

Under the command of his heartforce, his soul began to resist fiercely;

although he felt extremely tired, he still maintained his clarity of mind.

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“Alas...”

“We failed.”

“This human’s heartforce is quite strong. Although the mind-strands we attached to the Firstborn represent just part of our full power...even when we joined forces, we were still unable to hypnotize him.”

“It is simply too hard to hypnotize someone with such powerful heartforce.”

The three Queen Mothers were mentally conferring with each other.

They didn’t care about whether Ji Ning died or not; what they cared the most about was his heartforce technique. Even the set of archery-based heartforce taught by [Houyi’s Archery] was of use to them; although they didn’t use bows, this would at least still let them touch upon the nature of heartforce and let them more thoroughly understand it.

As for Ji Ning? If they could soulscour him, they could just kill him afterwards! There was no way they would let Ji Ning go back; if he did manage to return to the Three Realms and informed the most supreme figures of the Three Realms learn that the Snaphorn world had acquired a heartforce technique, those figures would probably personally come pay a visit.

They had been lucky enough to survive that ancient, calamitous war; they knew exactly how powerful the Three Realms were. It must be understood that the entire Primordial Ruinworld had been defeated! A single Snaphorn world would probably be effortlessly annihilated by the supreme powers of the Three Realms. Thus, if they could obtain the heartforce, there was no way they would let Ji Ning live and return to the Three Realms.

“No other options.”

“All we can do is have our Firstborn fight with this human. When they

fight, we'll use our mind-strands to watch closely. His current control over his heartforce is quite weak; we can fully and clearly sense his heartforce ripples. When we personally fight with him time and time again, watching his heartforce be applied hundreds or thousands of times over...I trust that eventually, we'll discover some of the secrets of heartforce and be able to develop a heartforce technique of our own."

"This clumsy method is the only one left to us."

The three Queen Mothers made their decision.

Truly powerful experts generally always had this sort of clumsy method available to them; to first watch, then to hypothesize and draw insights from what they saw. For example, after other major powers personally saw the mighty divine ability [Wings of the Garuda] many times, they were able to develop a similar flying divine ability. Perhaps it was a bit weaker than the [Wings of the Garuda], but it was still able to emulate part of its power.

This was what the three Queen Mothers had settled upon!

.....

"No need to capture the alien. Let him feel that there is a chance of surviving. The Firstborn among you...you can go and fight against him one-on-one. When his energy is almost depleted, let him rest. After he finishes resting, continue the attacks. Maintain this battle for as long as possible; if it takes many years, all the better." The Queen Mother's order came to them.

This caused the general and the many violet-caped Firstborn to feel puzzled and confused.

They were clearly capable of capturing him. Why didn't they?

And they were supposed to fight him one-on-one?

However, they didn't dare violate the orders of the Queen Mother. In fact, there was no way they could; their loyalty to the Queen Mothers sprang from their very blood. If the Queen Mother ordered it, they wouldn't even hesitate to commit suicide.

“Tonto, you go,” the general instructed.

“Alright.” Instantly, a violet-caped warrior flew out to attack Ning.

Ning’s divine power had only recovered to 10% of maximum. He had been maintaining a careful watch this entire time on that distant, awe-inspiring army. Upon seeing a violet-caped warrior charge towards him, he naturally went forth to fight.

.....

Ning was being trapped and assaulted by the Snaphorn world’s army in the Nihilum Zone. As their commanders went forth to fight him one-on-one, beginning a long, drawn-out battle within the infinite void of space... in the distant Three Realms, his Dao-companion, Yu Wei, had reached the most dangerous moment of her cultivation.

This was a beautiful world of flowers, but the skies above it had become filled with a vortex of lightning and clouds.

“Screeeech!”

Yu Wei stood there, head raised, staring towards the skies. Around her swirled a series of white phoenixes and fiery red phoenixes. A total of ninety-nine phoenixes were surrounding her, wildly resisting the crashing bolts of thunder coming from up above. With this collision, almost all of the phoenixes were blasted apart, leaving behind a single white phoenix by her side.

The thunder in the skies finally came to a complete halt.

The supreme Sword Immortal, Patriarch Lu, nodded as he watched from his position atop the nearby mountain peak. “Seven nine-sets of thunder tribulation; essentially what I thought it would be. My disciple is a Ki Refiner...even for a reincarnated Immortal, to encounter seven nine-sets of thunder tribulation is a bit much. It seems my disciple has indeed been hiding a few things.”

“The demonheart tribulation is beginning.”

“I’m afraid that for my disciple, the most dangerous tribulation is this

demonheart tribulation,” Patriarch Lu mused to himself.

Yu Wei, in her past life, had been a true asura demon; she had been extremely powerful, and in her past life she had been comparable to Immortal Northwalker. In this life, under the guidance of Patriarch Lu, she had reached an even higher level of insight into the Dao; after executing a forbidden technique, she had been able to overcome the seven nine-sets of thunder tribulation.

But the demonheart tribulation was strange and unfathomable.

“In her past life, due to her tragedies, she transformed into an asura demon,” Patriarch Lu mused to himself. “And in her heart, she is hiding a major secret that she won’t tell anyone, not even me. The deeper one hides secrets within the heart...the more terrifying the demonheart tribulation shall be. In her past life, she failed her Celestial Tribulation; I wonder how she will do in this one.”

Time passed, one day after the other.

Six days. Seven days. Eight days...

Fifteen days. Sixteen days...

Yu Wei still just sat there. Her demonheart tribulation persisted for an extraordinarily long period of time...

Chapter 16: Returning to the Grand Xia

Yu Wei's demonheart tribulation persisted for an extremely long period of time. Patriarch Lu, however, just stood there quietly atop the nearby mountain peak, watching in complete calmness.

Suddenly...

A sound rang out in the world, a sound which symbolized Heaven and Earth. It was incomparably profound, majestic, and intoxicating. As this Immortal melody rang out, rainbow-colored clouds began to appear in the sky, and the ground became filled with golden lotus flowers. It seemed as though the very center of the world was this black-robed maiden that sat in the lotus position.

Yu Wei's eyes were already open. A deep, longing love was in her eyes, but a hint of a smile was on her lips.

A flood of natural energy was gathering around her, and her body was beginning to emanate with an Immortal, spiritual aura.

"Heaven has bestowed propitious clouds, and Earth has given birth to golden lotuses." The distant Patriarch Lu smiled, then clapped his hands lightly. "From now on, you shall no longer be subject to the Three Calamities or Nine Tribulations. A fine Celestial Immortal...a fine Celestial Immortal!"

As for Yu Wei, she flew towards the distant Patriarch Lu.

"Well done." Patriarch Lu was very satisfied. "This tribulation is the greatest tribulation an Immortal cultivator shall ever face. After having overcome it...you have now ascended to the skies in a single step. Your life shall now last as long as the heavens themselves." Of course, although one would no longer be bothered by heavenly tribulations and one had a truly unlimited lifespan, if other, more powerful Immortals or Fiendgods killed you, there was nothing for it.

Even True Gods and Daofathers...even Pangu...would perish.

"If not for your tutelage, Master, your disciple definitely wouldn't have

overcome this Celestial Tribulation.” Yu Wei fell to her knees, respectfully pressing her head downwards and kowtowing in thanks. She had been very strong in her past life, but she hadn’t even been able to withstand six nine-sets of thunder tribulation, much less seven nine-sets. She had advanced at an astonishingly rapid pace while accompanying Patriarch Lu.

Patriarch Lu nodded lightly. After Yu Wei rose to her feet, he finally said, “Yu Wei...”

Yu Wei was startled. Patriarch Lu very rarely referred to her by her name.

“There is something which I have been hiding for you, so as to prevent it from impacting your Celestial Tribulation. And now...it is time to tell you,” Patriarch Lu said.

“Master, what is it?” Yu Wei hurriedly asked. In her heart, however, she had a bad feeling. So as to prevent it from impacting her Celestial Tribulation? Her Dao-heart was incredibly strong; what sort of matter could possibly make Patriarch Lu worry about her Celestial Tribulation being affected? A major matter, for sure...and one which involved something she truly cared about.

“Is it...my junior apprentice-brother, Ji Ning?” Yu Wei looked at Patriarch Lu. Her parents had died long ago; the only person she truly cared about in this world was her Dao-companion, Ji Ning.

“Right. It is Ji Ning.” Patriarch Lu nodded.

Yu Wei’s face changed slightly.

Patriarch Lu continued, “Just as you were preparing for your tribulation, the Xia Emperor of your Grand Xia world informed me of something. He said that Ji Ning fought a battle against nine Celestial Immortals of his hated foes, the Youngflame clan, in their Oldjade mountain range. That battle had severe repercussions; in fact, a number of Fiendgods that had been imprisoned there for countless years were released as well. However...the main event was still the battle between Ji Ning and the Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan. Two of the Celestial

Immortals of the Youngflame clan perished; Celestial Immortal Goldclock and Celestial Immortal Flamefish. Ji Ning had the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] protecting him, and so the Youngflame clan was completely unable to do anything to him. Thus...they played a trick. They caused Ji Ning to accidentally kill ten billion mortals.”

Yu Wei’s face instantly turned ashen!

She didn’t have any time to feel astonished by the Youngflame clan having nine Celestial Immortals, or to feel stunned by the fact that Ning had killed two of them. She didn’t have any time to feel amazed by the fact that he possessed the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] either. In her mind, a single phrase echoed repeatedly: ‘Accidentally kill ten billion mortals’.

“He accidentally killed ten billion mortals?” Yu Wei mumbled to herself.

The Dao of the Heavens were without compassion.

It judged karmic virtue and karmic sin according to its own rules. Even if one killed by accident, one still had to shoulder an appropriate amount of the karmic blame...and the amount of sin generated by killing that many mortals was utterly terrifying to even think about.

“His sin towered to the skies, causing karmic sinflames to descend,” Patriarch Lu continued. “The Ancestor of the Youngflame clan, Immortal Venomfreak, used the Protocosmic spirit-treasure, ‘Worldhold Pagoda’, to teleport the still-burning Ji Ning outside of the world of the Grand Xia, to an undoubtedly dangerous location. The seven days have long since passed; Ji Ning was able to successfully endure the karmic sinflames, but he still hasn’t returned to the world of the Grand Xia. This means he should be trapped in some extremely dangerous place which he cannot return from.”

Yu Wei’s heart shook, falling and rising and falling again.

Upon hearing that Ning had survived the karmic sinflames, she had let out a sigh of relief...but upon hearing that he had yet to return, she grew nervous again.

“Master...is there anything you can do?” Yu Wei immediately asked.

“Nothing.” Patriarch Lu shook his head. “The Worldhold Pagoda is a Protocosmic spirit-treasure with unfathomable power; it is even capable of sending someone to the infinite Void outside of the Three Realms. The Void outside the Three Realms contains many danger zones, and Greater Teleportation is useless within many of those danger zones. In fact...there are some places where even I would die if I were trapped there. Since Ji Ning has not yet returned, he definitely must be trapped there. The longer he stays there, the more dangerous it will be...and perhaps one day, he shall die.”

Yu Wei’s body shook.

“There’s nothing I can do. There’s nothing you can do either.” Patriarch Lu shook his head. “The danger zones of the infinite Void...most likely, only True Gods or Daofathers would dare to enter those places. However...those danger zones are far too vast! Even if a Daofather was to personally go out and investigate them, some danger zones would take tens of thousands of years, or even millions of years, to search through.”

The Nihilum Zone of the Primordial Ruinworld, for example, surrounded and covered the entire Primordial Ruinworld. If a Daofather wanted to search it...he would have to spend an extremely long period of time.

“Then...then...” Yu Wei found it hard to accept this.

“You can only wait.” Patriarch Lu continued, “Ji Ning has trained in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]; his master is definitely a Daofather. Only a Daofather has even a hint of a chance of finding him within the infinite Void. However...it’s hard to say how long that would take. I hope that his master will find him while he is still alive.”

Yu Wei bit her lips.

“What are your plans now?” Patriarch Lu looked at Yu Wei.

“I wish to return to the Grand Xia,” Yu Wei said softly.

“Mm.” Patriarch Lu nodded slightly.

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The world of the Grand Xia. Black clouds filled the skies above Stillwater City. Thunder and lightning were flashing within the dark clouds, occasionally striking downwards. Thunderclaps rang out incessantly, and an enormous amount of rain was falling.

Within the lightning and the rain, a black-robed woman exited from a spatial tear that she had created above Stillwater city.

“Junior apprentice-brother, I’ve returned...so why aren’t you here?” The black-robed woman looked downwards at Stillwater City, but only felt pulses of sadness and worry. In her past life, her heart had been encased in ice; after her parents died in this life, her heart had only grown even colder. The only person she truly cared about in her heart was Ji Ning; for Ning’s sake, she would even be willing to annihilate the heavens themselves without any hesitation.

In fact...when she had faced the demonheart tribulation of the Celestial Tribulation, she had relied on the love and affection she felt for Ning to help her endure that extremely long tribulation. This had caused the love she bore for Ning to grow even deeper. Within the illusions of the demonheart tribulation, she and Ning had experienced three thousand years of life together.

Whoosh.

Yu Wei flew downwards into Stillwater City, into the Black-White College.

She scanned the Black-White College with her coresense.

Rumble...

Another strand of coresense touched hers.

Whoosh.

Immortal Diancai instantly appeared in the air above his residence. Raising his head, he saw the distant black-robed maiden who was flying in his direction. He couldn’t help but call out with surprise and delight, “Yu Wei, you overcame the Celestial Tribulation?”

Immortal Diancai could hardly believe it; he wouldn't have been surprised by Ning overcome the Celestial Tribulation, but Yu Wei?

Yu Wei had failed at the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, during the trials within the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers. There was no way her talent compared in any way to Ning's. It had only been a few short decades; Ning hadn't undergone his tribulation yet, so how was it that she had overcome hers? Could it be that Yu Wei's Celestial Tribulation had been extremely weak? Or perhaps that Patriarch Lu was so formidable at teaching disciples that Yu Wei had been successful in overcoming her tribulation?

"Yes." Yu Wei nodded gently.

Immortal Diancai nodded repeatedly in excitement. "Good. This is a chaotic era; for our Black-White College to now give birth to another Celestial Immortal is wonderful. Wonderful!" But suddenly, Immortal Diancai thought of Ji Ning, and the fact that he had become Dao-companions with Yu Wei. His smile instantly vanished; in fact, a hesitant look appeared on his face.

Should he tell her?

"Uncle-master Diancai..." Yu Wei said.

"No need to call me 'uncle-master'," Immortal Diancai immediately said. Given Yu Wei's current level of power, the two could converse as equals; after all, for Immortal cultivators, age didn't really matter. For example, Yu Wei had reawakened her former memories, and if one counted her past life, she was much older than Immortal Diancai.

"You are Ji Ning's master; I naturally need to address you as 'uncle-master'," Yu Wei said. "Are you about to tell me about Ji Ning?"

Immortal Diancai was startled. "You...you already know?"

"Before I returned to the Grand Xia, my master informed me," Yu Wei said.

"Will Patriarch Lu be able to do anything?" Immortal Diancai asked frantically, "Does he know where Ji Ning was exiled to?"

“He doesn’t know.” Yu Wei shook her head.

“Then we should...?” Immortal Diancai had been worrying about Ning this entire time.

“Wait,” Yu Wei replied.

Immortal Diancai suddenly thought of something. He hurriedly instructed, “Ji Ning killed two of the Youngflame clan’s Celestial Immortals; they are utterly enraged by this. Although they’ve exiled Ji Ning, they aren’t going to let it rest! Any members of the Ji clan who dared to leave Swallow Mountain have all been killed by the Youngflame clan. You are Ji Ning’s Dao-companion; once they learn that you are back, they’ll probably act against you. You just became a Celestial Immortal; it’s unwise for you to fight against the Youngflame clan head-on for now.”

“Act against me?” A hint of a cold, murderous look flashed past Yu Wei’s eyes.

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The Nihilum Zone of the Primordial Ruinworld.

Ning was knocked flying backwards. After stabilizing himself, he looked at his surroundings, then suddenly began to laugh. His laughter was filled with madness, but it was also filled with a hint of longing and apology; longing for his loved ones, and an apology for leaving them.

“I won’t be able to accompany you any further,” Ning murmured to himself. His divine power had been almost completely used up.

However, the distant violet-caped warrior who had been battling Ning actually retreated.

The group of horned, violet-caped warriors began arguing amongst themselves.

“Tonto finished his contest; let me go next.”

“No, let me go.”

“Why should you be the one to go?”

“It’s rare for us to encounter an alien that can’t be killed, no matter how hard we hit him. This is a perfect chance for some training and tempering. Let’s take it slow. Don’t be in a rush!” The golden-caped general added, “And it looks to me like the alien is pretty much exhausted. Let him rest for a bit. After he recovers, you can go challenge him one-by-one. As long as he doesn’t die, you’ll all have a chance.”

Ning was speechless.

He had thought that he was definitely going to die...but they were going to let him recover?

“The warriors of the Snaphorn world...really like to fight. Are they...are they treating me as a training dummy?” Ning was puzzled.

The general and his violet-caped warriors, however, were quite resigned. Liked to fight?

Yes, they liked to fight. However, their innate nature was such that they would generally slaughter their foes; why would they let a fight drag on like this? However, this was the order of the Queen Mother, and in fact the Queen Mother’s mind was riding with them, ordering them to fight against Ji Ning one by one. How could they possibly dare to disobey?

“Forget them. Every extra day alive counts.” Ning stood there within the vacuum of space, immediately beginning to attune himself to those two supreme stellar bodies in the deepest reaches of the Void, the Solar Star and the Lunar Star. He began to draw energy from them, converting it into divine power.

Within the underwater estate. A black-robed Ning sat there in the lotus position. Suddenly, the giant yellow bear appeared, then hurriedly said, “Ji Ning, Ji Ning!”

“Senior bear.” The black-robed Ning looked at the giant yellow bear.

Chapter 17: The Seventeenth Stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]

“What happened just now?” The giant yellow bear immediately asked, “I clearly sensed that you were at your limit, but were still unable to defeat that violet-caped fellow. How is it that suddenly...?”

The black-robed Ji Ning knew what the big bear was asking. He didn’t seek to hide anything from the big bear; after all, there were a good number of individuals in the Three Realms who used heartforce. He immediately replied, “Senior bear, previously, when my divine power was almost used up, I felt as though things were hopeless. Ignoring all else, I poured everything into executing my most powerful sword-arts...but who would’ve thought that the power of my sword-arts would exceed even my own expectations? Only then did I realize that my heartforce had actually flowed into my sword-arts and had been slightly depleted.”

“Heartforce?” The giant yellow bear was surprised. “You were able to use your heartforce through your sword-fingers?”

“Yes.” Ning nodded.

“But but but...” The giant yellow bear didn’t dare believe it.

In truth, the giant yellow bear actually knew less about heartforce than Ning himself did. Ning, after all, had trained in [Houyi’s Archery], and had read a good number of books at Mount Innerheart regarding the Three Realms. As for the giant yellow bear, all he knew, he had learned while accompanying Daoist Threelives.

“You...you were able to use your heartforce through your sword-fingers...but you haven’t even undergone your tribulation, right...?” The giant yellow bear was still in a stunned state. Within the Three Realms, those who could control heartforce were all quite famous; every single one of them was a terrifying force, generally at the True God or Daofather level. Even the weakest of them were generally at least Empyrean Gods or

True Immortals.

“It has nothing to do with the tribulation.” The black-robed Ning shook his head. “It has everything to do with your level of insight into heartforce. According to the system which mighty Houyi established, heartforce can be divided into five levels. Thanks to the descent of the karmic sinflames, as well as the experiences I have undergone here in the Nihilum Zone...my heartforce actually ended up reaching the third level, ‘ruler’. Given that I’ve been training in [Houyi’s Archery] almost every day for the past half year while floating about in the Nihilum Zone, my mastery over my heartforce has been improved. Perhaps because I established a foundation through training [Houyi’s Archery], as well as due to my heartforce reaching the third level...I was lucky enough to execute the technique successfully.”

“The third stage?” The giant yellow bear didn’t really understand; he didn’t have any insight into Houyi’s systemized levels for heartforce.

“However...what’s the usage?” The black-robed Ning shook his head. “Even if I do understand how to apply heartforce to my sword-fingers...I still haven’t undergone my tribulation. I’m completely unable to defeat this Snaphorn world of the Primordial Ruinworld, much less escape the Nihilum Zone.”

“Don’t be discouraged,” the giant yellow bear said. “You’ve gained quite a lot, learning how to apply heartforce through your sword-fingers.”

“I’m not depressed.” The black-robed Ning was actually quite calm.

“Right; that massive army of the Snaphorn world has arrived, and they can easily capture you. Why aren’t they attacking? Why are they letting you recover?” The giant yellow bear was puzzled by this.

The black-robed Ning shook his head. “I don’t know the answer either. From the sound of it...they seem to want to use me as a target dummy for training. Perhaps there is another reason as well...but who cares? As long as I have a chance to stay alive, I’ll take it. The longer I can stay alive, the better a chance Master might have to find me. This is a chance to survive...I naturally have to seize it.”

“Right.” The giant yellow bear nodded as well.

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Within the misty, void-like region within the underwater estate.

The giant yellow bear had just returned here. He looked at the seven powerful experts.

“Well?” The beautiful, black-armored woman asked impatiently.

“Ji Ning says that the reason why the army of the Snaphorn world has only trapped him rather than killed him is because they apparently want to use him as a training dummy to temper and train some of their more powerful warriors.” The giant yellow bear continued, “However...the reason really isn’t worth over-analyzing. What matters is that Ji Ning is currently not in a life-or-death situation. There’s no need for you to reveal your presences for now; let’s just wait patiently. The longer this drags out, the better; if Patriarch Subhuti is able to find Ji Ning, then everything will be well.”

The seven Fiendgods all nodded in agreement.

“There’s one other important matter. Ning said that he’s been able to develop a way for him to apply his heartforce through his fingers,” the giant yellow bear suddenly said. “That’s why his power increased so dramatically.”

“A way for him to apply heartforce?!”

All seven of the Fiendgods simultaneously cried out in shock.

Red-hair said in disbelief, “He...he...you said heartforce...heartforce!!! How could he have developed...”

“Ji Ning trained in [Houyi’s Archery], and so he had a set of heartforce techniques to begin with. Perhaps this helped inspire him? In addition, his heartforce has reached the third level,” the giant yellow bear said. “He said something about the third level of heartforce, with Houyi having divided it up into five levels, but I didn’t really understand it.”

“The third level?”

“What a monster.”

“He’s absolutely...”

The seven of them were all stunned. The giant yellow bear had never needed to participate in any of the battles of Pangu’s World, but the seven of them had followed Daoist Threelives in one battle after another. They naturally knew a great deal of information regarding the most powerful figures of the Three Realms. If you knew yourself well and your foes well, you would live longer; they naturally knew that heartforce was divided into five levels, and that reaching the third level was considered a very high accomplishment, even in Pangu’s World.

“Humans truly live up to their reputation.” Of the seven figures, the child suddenly let out a sigh. “The comprehension ability of humans... they truly are the champion of the myriad races! I wonder how in the world Maiden Nuwa was able to develop a race with such comprehension abilities. Compared to humans, we Fiendgods have an all but non-existent level of comprehension abilities.”

“Humans rose up from a weak starting point to become the masters of Pangu’s Primordial World. Even amongst the ranks of the Daofathers, humans are the most numerous race! In fact, the power of humans as a race is capable of equaling the combined power of all the other myriad races. This young master of ours...he is a peerless monster, even amongst humans. There’s no way we can compare to him. No way!” The elder sighed as well.

All seven of them were true Fiendgods. The youngest of them had been born when Pangu’s World had just been created.

How long had they lived for?

They had watched with their own eyes as humanity became powerful. When the human race had first been created, they were an extremely weak race; most likely, any random, powerful Fiendgod would have been able to annihilate the entire race. But humans had been created by Maiden Nuwa, and after Pangu perished, Nuwa became the most powerful figure of the Primordial Era. Naturally, no one would go and wipe out her

human race for no good reason. Humans bred at a very fast rate, had incredible comprehension abilities, and grew up very quickly. They gave birth to Celestial Immortals...Pure Yang True Immortals...and even even Daofathers of the Great Firmament! They grew nonstop, and their status became higher and higher. And now...their single race was capable of withstanding all of the myriad other races combined! Even the Fiendgods of Primordial Chaos had to acknowledge humans and their status.

If anyone dared to act against humanity...the major powers of the human race would wipe them out!

“He lives up to being our young master, the successor to the Godking.” A friendly, amiable-looking youth said with a sigh, “He was actually able to come up with a way to apply heartforce, even though he hasn’t even undergone his Celestial Tribulation. Combined with the [Starseizing Hand]...our young master has most likely become the most powerful figure amongst all Void-level Fiendgods. In fact, he’s extremely close to being as powerful as an Empyrean God!”

“Not just yet, but...still, he does indeed have a chance at becoming nearly as powerful as an Empyrean God.” Snow Scorpion nodded.

There was naturally an enormous difference between Void-level Fiendgods and Empyrean Gods.

Still...how many Empyrean Gods had a monstrously powerful divine ability like the [Starseizing Hand]?

And how many were in control of heartforce?

These two points alone were able to make up for many weaknesses. Still...despite that, it could only be said that Ning stood a ‘chance at becoming nearly as powerful as an Empyrean God’; one couldn’t actually say that he truly already had the combat power of an Empyrean God. This was because when Fiendgods underwent their Empyrean Tribulation and become an Empyrean God, their divine bodies would undergo an earth-shaking change. In addition, their divine power would also skyrocket in quality and quantity. The difference in divine body and divine power was simply too great! The [Starseizing Hand] alone was not enough to make

up for a difference of this magnitude; even if one added heartforce into the mix, it would be hard to say.

And in addition...

Empyrean Gods also had very high levels of insight into the Dao.

Thus, ever since the creation of Pangu's World, there had never been anyone who, as a Void-level Fiendgod, could be said to have truly reached the power of an Empyrean God. Of course...Ning was a monster the likes of which had never been seen, even in Pangu's World. First of all, he was the only person who knew the [Starseizing Hand], with the other practitioner, Daoist Threelives, having died long ago. And secondly, although there were a few who knew how to apply heartforce, there were almost none at the Void-level; after all, even Ning had only developed this technique after first training in [Houyi's Archery], then undergoing karmic sinflames, then suffering in the Void and reaching the third level of heartforce.

To be able to possess both the [Starseizing Hand] and be able to apply heartforce...Ning truly was an absolute monster.

Thus, even these seven Fiendgods who had been alive since the days when Pangu had established the universe had to sigh at the fact that Ning was extremely close to the level of Empyrean Gods.

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"What is this alien doing?"

"He seems to be training."

The general and the 801 violet-caped warriors stared at the distant human youth. At this moment, above Ning's head had appeared two miniature stars; they were a miniature Solar Star and a miniature Lunar Star. Above the miniature Solar Star, flames blazed and a tiny Golden Crow flew about, while above the Lunar Star, an osmanthus tree was growing. Both the miniature Solar Star and the miniature Lunar Star were quite detailed; they seemed to truly be identical to the true Solar Star and Lunar Star, albeit countless times smaller.

His divine power was continuing to recover.

Ning was training quite calmly.

A long time later...

After his divine power had completely recovered, Ning was once more at peak power.

Whoosh. Ning opened his eyes, sweeping the warriors of the Snaphorn world with his gaze.

“He stopped. It seems he’s recovered.” The general smiled. “Baloni, you go.”

“Yes.” A desire for battle blazed in the eyes of a violet-caped warrior. He was so excited, he let out a hiss with his slender little tongue. “Alien brat, I’m not as useless as the likes of Tonto and the others. Ahaha...” His ear-piercing laughter rang out as he transformed into a black streak of light, charging straight for Ning.

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One massive battle after another.

Each time, a violet-caped warrior would fight against Ning by himself. Some had lower attack power than Ning, but were superior in speed and so could still give him a good fight. The violet-caped warriors also had particularly superb warriors who were superior to Ning in every aspect.

Each time, Ning fought until his divine power was completely exhausted, then would stop fighting and calmly focus on recovering through the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]! The aliens, in turn, permitted Ning to recover.

Fight! Train!

Fight! Train!

The aliens came in a steady stream, forcing Ning to squeeze out every bit of potential he had. The three Queen Mothers, through these constant engagements, were able to sense Ning’s heartforce rippling. They, in turn, were working hard to hypothesize how heartforce was to be used.

Time flowed on...and in the blink of an eye, more than twelve years had gone past.

Ning had completely forgotten the flow of time, losing himself in battle. During the past twelve years, he had completely focused all of his attention on the application of heartforce; every single battle was a test for him, and he constantly tried and tested new methods. His method of applying heartforce to his fingers became more and more exquisite; by now, Ning was actually able to use up nearly 3% of his total heartforce through a single sword-finger. This was quite astonishing...but clearly, he hadn't reached his maximum potential yet.

Rumble...

Rumble...

Two miniature versions of the Solar Star and the Lunar Star were hovering above Ning's head.

A large amount of divine power was circulating through his body. During the past twelve years, Ning's divine power had grown nonstop, becoming thicker, denser, and more perfect. And today...Ning had truly reached the peak of power possible for the sixteenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens].

BOOM!

His divine power finally began to transform.

Chapter 18: Eighteen Stormy Years

Ji Ning's breakthrough to the seventeenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] didn't cause too much of a disturbance; in fact, the nearby soldiers of the First Army of the Snaphorn world didn't even realize that he had made a breakthrough. This was how the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] worked; only when one made a major breakthrough to a new level would the Solar Star and the Lunar Star transmit Solar Truefire and Lunar Truewater. Lesser breakthroughs caused a much smaller disturbance.

Whooooosh. Within Ning's divine body, the increasingly pure Crimsonbright divine power began to transform into tiny little rivers that flowed through his veins, causing his divine body to grow even stronger.

The seventeenth stage!

This was the limit of power for his true body, before it underwent the Celestial Tribulation; if he dared to raise himself to the eighteenth stage, then the tribulation would descend at a moment's notice afterwards. Although he now controlled heartforce and felt more confident in his chances...he was still surrounded by karmic sinflames and was a tremendous sinner. Most likely, the power of his Celestial Tribulation would be even more terrifying. If he could survive here and leave this place, the Nihilum Zone...Ning couldn't even imagine what the scene of his tribulation would be like.

"I'm the sole heir of the [Starseizing Hand], the disciple of Patriarch Subhuti, a Fiendgod Body Refiner, and surrounded by karmic sinflames." Ning truly couldn't imagine it.

It was quite common for ordinary Fiendgod Body Refiners to undergo nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation. Upon overcoming the Celestial Tribulation, they would have become Empyrean Gods!

And he...he was no ordinary Fiendgod.

"I heard that some particularly monstrous geniuses amongst Ki Refiners will also encounter nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation," Ning mused to

himself. “I, on the other hand, am a Fiendgod Body Refiner. My Celestial Tribulation...”

To this very day, no one had ever fully understood which elements were taken into account in determining the power of the Celestial Tribulation. However, there were many past precedences; for example, Lu Dongbin was a Ki Refiner who had undergone nine nine-sets as a Ki Refiner.

Ordinary Fiendgods would often have to undergo nine complete nine-sets of thunder tribulation.

As for some truly monstrous geniuses, the most elite of the Fiendgods of the entire Three Realms...their backgrounds were so extraordinary that their tribulations were not like ordinary tribulations. Ning had the feeling...that he would probably be treated as one of the most peerless of Fiendgods of the Three Realms in this regard.

“Forget about that for now...I have so many enemies to battle, and I don’t have to hold anything back as I train in heartforce. I can’t waste this opportunity.” Ning opened his eyes, halting his cultivation.

“It seems he’s recovered. It’s my turn this time!” A muscular, violet-caped warrior roared with laughter, four giant warhammers in his four arms. Leaping through space, he charged towards Ning.

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Although he was in a dire situation...since there was nowhere to run, Ning didn’t think about anything, completely focusing on battle. As he gained more experience with the application of heartforce, Ning’s power began to rise continuously. The more heartforce his sword-fingers were able to unleash, the more powerful his blows would become. This caused the violet-caped warriors to feel unspeakable misery.

After the twelfth year, which is to say after Ning broke through to the seventeenth stage, more than half the violet-caped warriors were at a disadvantage when fighting Ning.

As his control over heartforce grew increasingly powerful, Ning began to be able to suppress one violet-caped warrior after another. However,

the difference in power wasn't that great; they were more than capable of staying alive.

By the fifteenth year, Ning was confident in being able to kill in battle some of the enemies who matched up poorly against him, but he did not kill them. He was afraid that if he did kill the violet-caped warriors, they would be enraged; that wouldn't be worth it! The most important thing for him right now was to delay; ideally, he would delay for a few decades or a century. The more time passed, the better the chances that his master, Patriarch Subhuti, would be able to find him.

By the sixteenth year, Ning was able to use up nearly a twentieth of his heartforce in a single blow of his sword-fingers. This was him using full power in a single hand; there was no way he could reach this level when using all six arms.

By the seventeenth year, Ning was able to use up a sixteenth of his heartforce in one stroke.

By the eighteenth year, Ning was able to use up a fifteenth of his heartforce in one stroke! By now, his application of heartforce was perfect, in that not a single bit of his heartforce was wasted or leaked out to the outside world. Ning could no longer come up with any way to further improve it. Although it was still a bit inferior compared to the amount of heartforce he could use when using [Houyi's Archery]...there naturally were some differences between close combat and archery.

Aside from mastering the application of heartforce, Ning had also grown even more formidable in sword-arts.

Within the Nihilum Zone, there were no Daos to disturb him, allowing Ning to focus even more purely attuning with his sword-arts, causing him to just barely touch upon the true essence of the sword.

Ning had been fighting this entire time within the Nihilum Zone. His life was a very calm one...but within the distant Three Realms, the world of the Grand Xia was no longer calm.

Stillwater City. The Black-White College.

Night.

Within a mountain of the Black-White College, a black-robed maiden was seated opposite a black-haired, black-robed man. Both were quietly, pensively drinking wine.

“The Seamless Gate has grow more and more bold.” Immortal Diancai’s eyes were filled with anger...but he then shook his head and sighed. “However, they are indeed formidable. They were actually able to cause the Northmont clan of Stillwater to fracture internally. So many high-level members of the Northmont clan actually desired to throw their support to the Seamless Gate...but fortunately senior Unity was enraged and moved to slaughter them.”

Just two hours ago, this very day, Celestial Immortal Unity had struck out in rage, wiping out more than half of the Void-level experts of the Northmont clan! All the traitors were killed!

“After senior Unity made his move, the Seamless Gate sent a diplomatic note; if he doesn’t throw his support to the Seamless Gate, then they shall become mortal enemies.” Immortal Diancai looked at Yu Wei. “Yu Wei, what do you think we should do?”

“It doesn’t really matter what we think; the one which the Seamless Gate truly cares about is senior Unity. According to the stories, senior Unity has power comparable to that of a Pure Yang True Immortal,” Yu Wei said. “And this is precisely the reason why the Seamless Gate has spent so much effort on our Stillwater Commandery; they want to pull senior Unity over to their side.”

“The Seamless Gate truly has spent quite a bit of effort on us. The other commanderies might be in a state of chaos, but they aren’t nearly as bad as our Stillwater Commandery is. Still...senior Unity truly is resolute and decisive. The Northmont clan had fractured to the point where nearly half wanted to surrender to the Seamless Gate; even Celestial Immortal Hunchmont ended up being abducted by the Seamless Gate! He actually slaughtered more than half of his Void-level kinsmen. Even if it meant Hunchmont’s death, he still insisted on standing by the side of the Xia

Emperor.” Diancai sighed. “Now that the Seamless Gate has sent that diplomatic note...a disaster is about to befall Stillwater Commandery.”

When he thought about this disaster...Immortal Diancai thought of Ji Ning.

That disciple of his who had wrought so many miracles.

That peerless disciple of his who had assaulted the headquarters of the Youngflame clan, slaughtered two mighty Celestial Immortals, and was capable of resisting karmic sinflames.

“I wonder how Ji Ning is doing. It has been eighteen years, but he still hasn’t returned.” A hint of urgency was in Immortal Diancai’s eyes.

“Eighteen years.” Yu Wei looked at the bright moon in the night sky, her heart filled with countless thoughts.

Junior apprentice-brother...

When will you return?

“It’s better for him to return later; he might be able to dodge this storm.” Immortal Diancai was still angry. “The Seamless Gate is acting with such wild abandon, and senior Unity continues to stand by the side of the Xia Emperor, but the Xia Emperor hasn’t even come to help out.”

“The entirety of the Grand Xia is in a state of chaos. Every area is asking for his help. How is he supposed to accomplish it all?” Yu Wei sighed. “In addition..how do you know, uncle-master, that the Xia Emperor hasn’t been helping out in secret?”

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It had only been eighteen years...but the situation of the Grand Xia was more than a hundred times worse than it had been when Ning was present.

When Ning had been present, although the various commanderies throughout the Grand Xia all saw some disturbances, on the whole things were still fairly calm. But soon after Ning slaughtered the two Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan, a series of Celestial Immortals began

to perish throughout the world of the Grand Xia. It was either done by the Seamless Gate, or by the Xia Emperor in his furious reprisals.

All sorts of battles were carried out in secret!

One Celestial Immortal after another perished!

The Grand Xia's various marquisdoms, supreme clans, and major sects also began to engage in reprisal killings!

The storm was growing more and more violent. Even the number one assassin's guild of the Grand Xia, 'Bloodcloud Hall', had revealed its true face. It struck out time and time again, assaulting and killing some of the tougher foes of the Seamless Gate!

Nine years ago...

A dangerous situation had appeared within one of the headquarters of the Northmont clan; even Loose Immortals who went to investigate would perish. Celestial Immortal Hunchmont and Yu Wei had gone together to investigate; logically speaking, if they joined forces, the two of them should be able to escape from any danger without problems. However... the Seamless Gate had actually paid an enormous price to trap them there. Yu Wei, by using an escape technique which Patriarch Lu had bequeathed unto her, had been lucky enough to escape...but Celestial Immortal Hunchmont had been captured alive!

By the time Sword Immortal Unity learned of this, it was too late; Celestial Immortal Hunchmont had been sent off to the 'Fifth World.'

In fact, it was the capture of Celestial Immortal Hunchmont that truly caused the Seamless Gate and Stillwater Commandery to begin fighting.

"Everyone in the Three Realms believes me to be dead, but the Seamless Gate actually knew that I am alive." Sword Immortal Unity had a bad feeling as well; the Seamless Gate was even harder to deal with than he had expected. They used all sorts of methods to try and influence Sword Immortal Unity, be it through tribes, territory, or other methods.

However...given that Sword Immortal Unity had the mental fortitude to hide himself away for so many years, how could the Seamless Gate

possibly change his mind so easily as this?

You want to seduce the kinsmen that I favor?

Seduce away the Void-level Earth Immortals that I wanted to teach?

Fine. All traitors...die!

Hunchmont? If you want to kill him, then kill him, Seamless Gate!

Sword Immortal Unity seemed to be without any weaknesses whatsoever. Over the course of nine years, they had engaged in several major battles, and even Yu Wei and Immortal Diancai had encountered grave danger. At the same time...the news that Yu Wei had become a Celestial Immortal finally began to spread out, and her strength became publicly acknowledged. However...when assaulted by the Seamless Gate, Yu Wei and Immortal Diancai received aid from Sword Immortal Unity as well!

Unity was indeed incredibly powerful.

He, all by himself...had forced thirty-six Celestial Immortals of the Seamless Gate to flee in disarray! This was what it meant to have power close to a Pure Yang True Immortal's!

Ever since Sword Immortal Unity had revealed his sharpness, not even the Youngflame clan had dared to cause trouble in Stillwater Commandery any longer. Although Immortal Venomfreak was also quite famous for his power...his strength lay in his cunning, in subterfuge, and in his many clones. As for Unity, known as the Supreme Sword Immortal, he had truly astonishing close combat power.

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Within the Nihilum Zone.

"The sword...so it is as simple and pure as this." Ning was currently battling against one of the violet-caped warriors. His sword-fingers dimly glowed with a sharp, silvery-white shine. Clang! Clang! Clang! Ning's sword-fingers collided with the foe's greataxe, but actually knocked it flying back.

His sword-fingers now glowed with that sharp, silvery-white light...

This was the other thing Ning had gained during these eighteen years of battle, aside from learning how to use heartforce!

These eighteen years had resulted in hundreds of more battles than Ning had experienced in all his previous decades of life combined! This was because all of his time was spent either replenishing his divine power or fighting. Repeated battles. Endless battles! And there were no Daos present; in fact, not even the Dao of the Sword was present to influence him. Ning didn't have to think about what was the best way to summon the most amount of natural energy.

He didn't have to consider these things; all he had to think about was honing his instincts and using them to apply his sword-arts in battle.

And so...Ning's sword-arts had become more and more pure.

They guided to the very essence of swordplay itself!

Chapter 19: At The Scroll's End, the Dagger Appears

[Note – This chapter's title comes from a Chinese idiom which essentially means 'true intentions revealed in the end'; it comes from a famous historical story where an assassin attempted to assassinate the Qin Emperor by hiding a dagger within a scroll that the Qin Emperor wanted. The Qin Emperor accepted the scroll and began to unfurl it, and at the very bottom/end of the scroll, the dagger appeared; the assassin immediately grabbed the dagger and used it to make the assassination attempt. Thus, the saying 'at the scroll's end, the dagger appears' refers to true intentions being revealed]

His swordplay became so pure that one day, the tips of Ji Ning's sword-fingers began to glow with that sharp, silvery-white aura. This silvery-white aura caused his sword-fingers to become even sharper and fiercer! They were now sharper and more penetrating than even actual swords!

Within the underwater estate.

The black-robed Ning was currently asking the giant yellow bear some questions. "Senior bear, do you know what the sharp lights surrounding my fingers are?"

"You don't know?" The giant bear was puzzled. "You know about heartforce, so how can you not know about...oh, right. Most likely, Patriarch Subhuti was worried that you would set your sights too high, and so he didn't tell you right away."

"What do you mean?" Ning asked.

The giant bear explained, "For Sword Immortals, fully mastering the Grand Dao of the Sword isn't the end of the road. After you completely master the entire Grand Dao of the Sword...you'll begin to focus on understanding the essence of the sword itself. When using sword-arts, your blade will naturally emit this sort of sharp light. This sort of sharp light is also referred to as 'swordforce'; generally speaking, peerless Sword

Immortals who have thoroughly mastered the Grand Dao of the Sword will begin to slowly discover and cultivate this power. You've just barely touched upon it; I imagine you are at the lowest, most basic level of swordforce."

"Swordforce?" Ning now understood. "So that's how it is. When I was in Mount Innerheart, I saw some books which made note of the fact that when one completely mastered the Grand Dao of Taiji, one would begin to attune to the very essence of the Taiji itself, at which point a strange type of power would slowly be developed; taiji-force! It seems my swordforce is quite similar to this taiji-force in nature."

"Right." The giant bear smiled and nodded.

Ning now completely understood.

Taiji-force, swordforce...generally speaking, those who completely mastered the Grand Daos of Taiji or the Sword would be able to slowly work on controlling this type of power. It could be considered an additional supplement, making one a bit more powerful in battle.

"One of the greatest dangers for Immortal cultivators is being overly ambitious." Ning let out a sigh.

For example, when he first entered the Black-White College, the Primal Daoists, Loose Immortals, and Earth Immortals wouldn't even tell him that the Dao was divided up into Heavenly Daos, Grand Daos, and ordinary Daos. This was precisely because they were worried about their disciples being excessively ambitious, resulting in them accomplishing nothing whatsoever! The same was true for Patriarch Subhuti; if he had told Ning about swordforce all along, it might've caused Ning to deviate when attuning to the Dao of the Sword, which would actually negatively impact his insights.

"I haven't even fully mastered the Dao of the Sword yet, but I've actually begun to be able to use a slight amount of swordforce already." Ning laughed in a gratified manner.

"The number of battles you have engaged in during the past ten-plus years was far more than the total number of battles you engaged in before

you arrived here in the Nihilum Zone. The Dao of the Sword is an attacking Dao to begin with; if the Dao of the Sword or the Heavenly Daos were present here, I imagine that you would've advanced quite astonishingly fast in the Dao of the Sword." The giant bear added, "Since this place does not have the Dao of the Sword, you haven't been able to advance in the Dao of the Sword at all...which means you accidentally focused on attuning to the essence of the sword and ended up controlling a tiny thread of swordforce. This can be considered an unexpected benefit for you. I trust that in the future, the fact that you have started your quest for the essence of the sword will be of tremendous help to you in comprehending the Dao of the Sword."

"Right." Ning nodded lightly.

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"Monster. A true monster."

"No wonder Lu Dongbin felt so certain that he was born to be a peerless Sword Immortal, and even Patriarch Subhuti felt that he was extremely talented in this regard. Even before mastering the Dao of the Sword, he's already taken control of a tiny amount of swordforce. Clearly, he has an incredibly, unbelievably high level of aptitude towards the sword."

Within the blurry, void-like region within the underwater estate. The giant yellow bear had told them about his conversation, and the seven Fiendgods all signed in amazement.

However...Ning had only mastered the most basic, elementary level of swordforce at present; there was a limit as to how much it could help him. By comparison, his ruler-level heartforce had helped Ning increase his power much more.

Still...that tiny bit of mastery over swordforce was a testament to the fact that Ning truly was an unbelievable talent as a Sword Immortal.

"No matter how talented he is, it won't matter unless he can escape this Nihilum Zone." A muscular man whose entire body was red in color let out a sigh. "To date, the Snaphorn world hasn't truly gone all out against our young master...but if push comes to shove, then we will be forced to

intervene. By then, we will have to deal with the master of the Snaphorn world...and we have no idea as to if we can beat him or not.”

“The real question is, has the master of the Snaphorn world reached the Daofather level yet?”

“If not, he won’t pose a threat.”

“But if he is at the Daofather level...we’ll probably be doomed.”

“We have nowhere to run. Even if we don’t move to rescue our young master, the master of the Snaphorn world will eventually discover the Starseizing Manor. After discovering the Starseizing Manor...if he is at the Daofather level, he’ll definitely be able to find our world. By then...we’d still have to fight him.”

Technically speaking, Ning had yet to become an Empyrean God, and per the orders of Daoist Threelives, they weren’t supposed to save him; they were supposed to leave Ning’s fate up to himself, and if he died they were to go find another successor. Alas...they were now trapped within the Nihilum Zone and unable to depart from it, much less find another successor.

This day, Ning engaged in dozens of battles before coming to a halt, acting as though he needed to replenish his divine power. In reality, Ning still had half of it left; after all, now that he had reached the seventeenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], his divine power was much thicker than it had been in the past. For the sake of being prepared for all eventualities, he always came to a halt when he only had half of his divine power left.

In turn, the violet-caped warriors always let him replenish his divine power as needed.

As he replenished his energy...three mighty minds were conversing within the darkness of the Void.

“Ever since this human began fighting against our Firstborn, he’s continuously improved his mastery over his heartforce. Less and less of it leaks out, and the ripples it causes are harder and harder to discern.

Recently...he's leaked out no heartforce in his battles whatsoever. Although we can vaguely sense that he is using it, we are unable to sense any of the heartforce ripples now. This poses no use to us in our attempts to develop a heartforce technique at all." The first Queen Mother's thoughts held a hint of resentment.

"Two elder sisters, what should we do?" The third Queen Mother asked.

"During this period of time, tens of thousands of battles have been carried out. We've developed a few ideas, while you, little sister, have actually managed to coalesce some heartforce. You've developed a basic level of skill in heartforce; this can be described as a merit for this human." The second Queen Mother continued, "However, our elder sister and I have yet to be able to coalesce heartforce, much less figure out a way to apply it."

"Although I've managed to coalesce heartforce, I still need to slowly work away at a method for applying it." The third Queen Mother's thoughts held a hint of resentment as well. "If he continues to leak heartforce...a few more centuries of battle should be enough."

A hundred years, a thousand years...these were very short periods of time for them.

Alas, Ning had only given them eighteen years of 'bliss'. By now, Ning had very perfect control over his heartforce. When using his sword-arts, his heartforce didn't leak outwards at all; the Queen Mothers knew that Ning was using heartforce, but there was no way for them to analyze it. After all, the more that leaked out, the more easy it was to analyze.

"But we aren't able to hypnotize him...and he'd rather die than let us search his memories. Let's kill him," the second Queen Mother said.

The third Queen Mother opposed this. "Let's capture him alive first, then imprison him within our bodies. Let us slowly torment him, slowly torture him...and perhaps one day we'll be able to search his memories."

"Capture him and imprison him within third sister's body." The first Queen Mother agreed as well.

“Fine.” The second Queen Mother accepted this outcome.

And so...

They gave the order.

The Nihilum Zone. The golden-caped general and violet-caped warriors of the Snaphorn world were all relaxing and chatting amongst themselves. Although they had always felt that letting this alien stay alive wasn't really in keeping with their nature, and they truly wanted to slaughter him...how could they dare disobey the orders of their Queen Mothers?

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The mind-strands that had been attached to the golden-caped general and the hundreds of violet-caped Firstborn warriors began to transmit orders from the Queen Mother.

“Children, capture this alien right away and send him to our sacred palace.”

Instantly, the bored, golden-caped general and his many violet-caped warriors grew excited, their eyes lighting up.

Perfect.

They were finally going to be allowed to make their act. For the entire First Army to be idle here...the millions of Snaphorn warriors were utterly bored senseless.

“The Queen Mother commands that the alien is to be captured alive and sent to the sacred palace.” The general sent mental messages to each and every one of the violet-caped warriors; after all, the Queen Mothers had only been able to send direct messages to the Firstborn. There were many violet-caped warriors who didn't know the news yet. “This time...there's no need for the rest of you to intervene. I'll handle him myself.”

“Yes.” No one would disobey.

This was because the general hadn't fought a single time yet!

.....

Although Ning was in the middle of replenishing his divine power, with a miniature Solar Star and Lunar Star floating above his head, transmitting energy to him to be converted into divine power...Ning was still keeping a very close watch on his surroundings. However, he didn't realize that the distant general was about to make his move...but the giant yellow bear did, and immediately warned him: "Ji Ning, that alien general is about to make his move."

"What?!" Ning was startled awake, instantly opening his eyes.

Torch-light blazed within his eyes.

He immediately saw the golden-caped general charge towards him from ten thousand kilometers away. The golden-caped general had always been Ning's greatest source of fear...but he had never fought against Ning, not even once. In the past, he had always just watched from far away. In addition, during the past eighteen years, as long as Ning was in the process of replenishing his divine power, the enemy would not act against him.

"General." Ning sent his divine sense out in a ripple. "After waiting for so many years...it seems you are finally going to make your move."

"Our warriors have been tempered enough, given how many times they've fought you." The general strode through the void as he spoke. His appearance was identical to that of the other horned warriors, but his eyes were older and wiser, and his invisible aura of power was far more menacing. "Alien...you should forget about resisting. If you do so, you might be able to stay alive."

"You won't kill me?" Ning asked.

If he could stay alive somehow, then he would do so, trying to buy as much time as he could.

"Follow me to the Snaphorn world. I won't kill you," the general said.

Ning's heart trembled. To the Snaphorn world? It must be understood that this region of space was simply a part of the Void that was under the control of the Snaphorn world. The true territory of the Snaphorn world

was within the Primordial Ruinworld. By comparison, the Nihilum Zone was safer; the Primordial Ruinworld was truly the main headquarters of the enemy. If he entered there...his chances of escape would be even lower. How could Ning possibly go in?

“Impossible.” Ning shook his head, staring at the general.

“Heh heh heh...” The general laughed, but four long whips suddenly appeared in his hands.

“Your resistance is futile.” The general was very calm. His self-confidence came from his overwhelming power. Instantly, his four arms lashed out simultaneously, and the four long black whips lashed out many tens of thousands of meters like four enormous black serpents. They reached Ning in almost an instant.

Ning used two arms to guard in front of him, while the fingers of his other four arms transformed to become three thousand meters long, using sword-arts to block the attacks.

Bang!

Ning was already doing his utmost, simultaneously using 3% of his heartforce with each strikes of his four sword-fingers. In fact, he was clearly able to block the long black whips...but the whips trembled and somehow arrived in front of Ning’s head.

Although Ning hurriedly moved to block, those four black whips had completely entangled Ning. If the violet-caped warriors could be described as supreme Celestial Immortals, then this golden-caped warrior had already reached the Empyrean God level.

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Within the misty, void-like region inside the underwater estate.

“That golden-caped general has made his move.” The giant yellow bear had a serious look on his face as he watched what was happening in the outside world. “Ji Ning is fighting back...but he’s already become trapped by the whips.”

“Move.” The red-haired Empyrean God gave the order to their group of seven Fiendgods. “Completely wipe out the entire First Army.”

Chapter 20: Seven Mighty Empyrean Gods Emerge

The black whips snaked out in circles, completely entangling Ji Ning. Ning gritted his teeth and struggled, but was unable to break free. This caused Ning to feel both rage as well as a hint of sorrow.

“I am a practitioner of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], and am incomparably close to the Empyrean God level in power. I don’t even hold those violet-caped warriors, each of which is comparable to a supreme Celestial Immortal, in any regard. Who would’ve thought that in just a single exchange, I would be captured?” Ning gave a cold look towards the golden-caped general and the group of violet-caped warriors.

“Haha, look at the alien! He still seems untamed and unruly.”

“He thought that just because he gave us a good fight, that he could overcome our general?”

“The general has completely transcended the Heaven-level long and has truly reached the Saint-level. In addition, as the general of the First Army, he’s one of the most powerful of Saint-level experts; how could this alien possibly overcome him?”

The violet-caped warriors were all chatting amongst themselves.

The Saint-level; this was equivalent to the Empyrean God level of the Three Realms!

They had extremely high statuses within the Snaphorn world, and were qualified to bear the golden cape. The Elders of the Palace of Elders and the generals of the armies were generally all at this level! In addition, a general who commanded the First Army, the border army that often engaged in wars, was definitely a god of war amongst the Snaphorn world, someone venerated by countless kinsmen!

“Imprison him and take him back to the sacred palace,” the general ordered.

“Yes.” The group of violet-caped warriors all assented. They glanced towards the captured Ning with looks of disdain and pity. After countless ages of war, the only thing the warriors of the Snaphorn world felt towards all aliens was enmity.

“Let’s go back.”

“Our entire First Army has been dawdling here for so long. It’s been boring.” The countless horned warriors were all dancing in joy. These past eighteen years truly had been extremely boring for these warriors.

Rumble...

A golden warship flew over from the distance.

The general was holding a whip with but a single hand, and was dragging the entangled, bound human youth, Ji Ning, behind him. He looked back at Ning. “You are fairly strong; your sword-arts, at least, are close to the Saint-level in power. A pity for you that you met me.”

Ning glanced at the general, then ignored him.

He knew himself that with the Fourth Cycle of the [Starseizing Hand], his ruler-level heartforce supporting him, his swordforce, and his seventeenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], that he should have in theory reached the threshold of Empyrean Gods! However, the mere ‘threshold’ represented a weak Empyrean God...and this golden-caped general was a very strong one!

Suddenly...

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Without any warning, four figures suddenly appeared out of nowhere around Ji Ning. Their explosively powerful auras caused Ning’s face to instantly change. He couldn’t help but turn his to look, and when he did, he saw ten figures with utterly astonishing auras. There was a bald elder with narrowed eyes, an amiable-looking youth, a bewitchingly beautiful woman with snow-white eyebrows, and...

“Senior Redsnow?” Ning was amazed.

The seven figures included a tall, muscular man with red hair and golden armor. It was the red-haired Empyrean God who Ning had met in the past!

These seven figures had equally powerful auras; they were all on the same level.

“What?!” The general, who had been pulling Ning behind him with the whip, turned his head and saw those seven figures as well. His face also changed. “Who are you!”

Danger!

The general suddenly felt a powerful sense of danger in his heart. At the same time...he couldn't figure out how these seven powerful figures could've suddenly arrived within the space territory controlled by his Snaphorn world.

“Hahaha...” Of the seven figures that had appeared around Ning, one was the child who was wearing a neck-circlet. The child suddenly let out a laugh as his body began to rapidly grow in size. Just before, he had been smaller than even Ning, but now he transformed to become thirty thousand meters tall, becoming even larger and more muscular than the warriors of the Snaphorn world.

The massive child roared with laughter...and suddenly, a pillar of golden light shot out from his eyes.

“DIVINE GOLDBLAZE LIGHT!”

The child let out a loud shout.

The eye-beams of light swept out in every direction. Whoosh...the pillars of light shot out from his eyes expanded to cover an area of a hundred thousand kilometers. All the horned warriors and black-caped warriors touched by the pillars of light all let out agonized cries. They all began to melt, like snowmen under the sun...with the only difference being that they melted far faster!

“No!”

“It hurts!”

“What is this?!”

Wherever those eye-beams swept past, the horned warriors and black-caped warriors died, melting into death without being able to resist at all.

In the blink of an eye, more than ten thousand Snaphorn warriors had perished.

“But, but, but...” The general was stunned for a moment, but he then immediately gave an order. “Quick, assemble the formation!”

“Yes!” The 801 violet-caped warriors were shocked awake by this order. If they were going to join into a powerful formation, the 801 of them had to take the lead! A small war-formation needed a single black-caped warrior and ten ordinary Snaphorn warriors, while a medium war-formation needed a violet-caped warrior, a hundred black-caped warriors, and a thousand ordinary warriors.

The largest formations, however...required a general, a hundred commanders, ten thousand black-caped warriors, and a hundred thousand ordinary warriors joining forces! Thus, these violet-caped warriors had to lead the way; otherwise, the unorganized masses would be completely unable to resist that terrifying divine light.

.....

The gaze-attack of the child had stretched out to a hundred thousand kilometers.

“You want to flee?” The beautiful woman with the snow-white eyebrows transformed into a streak of white light...and then in her stead, an enormous, snowy white scorpion appeared within the Void. This snowy white scorpion was like an enormous island, a full ten thousand kilometers in size. Its face, however, was the face of a human woman, and it also had those strange-looking white eyebrows.

This titanic snow-white scorpion almost instantly charged into the group of those 801 violet-caped warriors.

The snowy white eyebrows of the scorpion were even longer than its tail. They fluttered forward, one of them transforming into countless white strands of silk that wrapped around those violet-caped warriors. Luckily enough, they had been fleeing in many different directions, and so when the snowy white scorpion had appeared, they had already begun pulling away from each other, and so part of them were able to escape.

Of the 801 violet-caped warriors, over six hundred were instantly entangled by those eyebrows!

Ssssssss....

In the same instant that they were entangled by the eyebrows, a layer of frost began to appear on their bodies. And then...like ice cracking, they were completely chopped and broken apart by the white eyebrow-strands. Even their cores were destroyed, causing them all to perish.

.....

This took time to describe...but in reality, as soon as the seven figures had appeared, the child and the black-armored beauty had immediately struck with utterly devastating power. This completely enraged the general.

“Damn you, aliens!”

The general no longer paid Ning any mind. He transformed into a streak of light, charging towards the now-titanic child.

The titanic child looked down at the general, letting out a laugh.

Clang!

The child held his neck-circlet in his hands, smashing it downwards towards the general.

The long whips in the general’s four arms expanded to become more than thirty thousand meters long, furiously seeking to entangle the neck-circlet.

“Oh, so you have quite a bit of strength.” The child gave it a tug, but wasn’t able to tug it free.

“Hmph.”

The golden-armored, red-haired Empyrean God watched this all happen. He immediately let out a cold snort, then stabbed forward with the longspear in his hands.

Rumble...

When the spear stabbed out, an enormous whirlpool appeared within the Void, with the center of the whirlpool being the tip of the spear.

“Not good.” The general immediately had a tremendous feeling of danger. He had the feeling that this red-haired fellow...was far more powerful than the child and the scorpion lady. In fact, the red-haired fellow might be strong enough to kill him!

“Flee.” The general no longer thought of fighting back.

That red-haired man alone was enough to make him feel helpless...and the general had six other foes at his level of power to worry about as well!

Swish!

Space suddenly seemed to have been thrown into chaos.

The general was stunned. He lowered his head, looking at his chest...and there was the tip of an enormous spear sticking out it. His core had been completely shattered.

“I...I just died?” The general couldn’t believe it.

But how could he know that this Fiendgod, Redsnow, had been the number one general under the command of Daoist Threelives? He had been awe-inspiringly famous, even back in Pangu’s Primordial World, and was truly one of the most utterly supreme of Empyrean Gods.

“Red-hair, how could that little alien bastard have been a match for you? You didn’t even give us a chance to act!” The gentle-looking youth complained with resignation.

“I was preparing to have a nice, big fight with him, but you killed him right away!” The child complained helplessly as well.

Ning just stared blankly at all this.

Good heavens...

Just now, he had felt utter despair...but these seven figures had suddenly appeared, and they were ridiculously powerful. Was this the power of a true Empyrean God? It was on a completely different level from the Celestial Immortals; most likely hundreds of Celestial Immortals would have to join together into a formation to be able to resist such power.

“Senior Redsnow,” Ning hurriedly called out.

Redsnow glanced at Ning, then smiled.

Because he had a full head of red hair, his closest friends often simply referred to him as ‘red-hair’, but his name was indeed Redsnow. Thus, the spear-art he developed had also been named [Redsnow].

“Hurry up. This isn’t the time to play around,” Empyrean God Redsnow said. “Wipe them out as soon as you can; we need to come up with a way to escape this Nihilum Zone.”

“Alright.”

“Right.”

The leader of these seven was Empyrean God Redsnow.

Redsnow had been very steady and reliable when they had followed Daoist Threelives, and he was also extremely powerful; everyone acknowledged his leadership!

.....

The Snaphorn world. The Palace of Elders.

“What?”

“Where did those aliens come from?”

“Impossible.”

The nine mighty Elders who had been lazily watching the mirror were all shocked. The general of the First Army had easily captured that alien... but who would’ve imagined that seven mysterious figures would suddenly arrive? The seven had massacred their warriors with utterly

overwhelming power, and even one of the top generals of the Snaphorn world, the general of the First Army, had actually been killed by that red-haired foe in their first exchange of blows.

This caused them to feel enraged...and also horrified!

Although they were Elders and were also at the Saint-level like the general...their responsibilities lay in the governance of the Snaphorn world. By comparison, their combat abilities were inferior. In an actual battle, they probably would be weaker than the general.

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Within the infinite darkness of the Void, three minds were conversing.

“What?!”

“The Fiendgods of the Three Realms have arrived as well?”

“Damn!”

“That region of space was locked long ago; there’s no way they could’ve gone straight there. There’s only one possibility; those Fiendgods of the Three Realm have been accompanying that human this entire time in some sort of portable dimensional treasure. They hadn’t attacked because they were waiting for us to capture the human; only then could they no longer hold back.”

“These seven Fiendgods should all be at the Empyrean God level...only, that red-haired Empyrean God is a bit too ridiculously strong. Even my child, Habul, was instantly killed. Even in that ancient war, there were very few Empyrean Gods who were so terrifyingly strong.”

“Let us personally intervene to annihilate them.”

“Right.”

All three Queen Mothers began to emit a terrifying, killing intent...

Chapter 21: Two Worlds Collide

The Nihilum Zone. Millions of horned warriors were fleeing in terror and despair.

“That enemy with the neck-circlet...all the warriors in the locations he looks at die. He’s too terrifying.”

“The general was killed on one blow.”

They had completely collapsed.

In a short instant, more than six hundred of the eight hundred commanders of the First Army had been wiped out, along with their general. The horned warriors were unable to assume their formations; naturally, they no longer even thought about fighting back. All they felt was utter terror and panic as they frantically fled in every which way.

But right at this moment, the exact same voice rang out from the deepest, innermost parts of every warrior’s heart, a voice that came from their very essence, their bloodline.

“Queen Mother’s Incarnation!”

“Queen Mother’s Incarnation!”

“Queen Mother’s Incarnation!”

The voice echoed repeatedly. The millions of fleeing horned warriors came to a halt at the same moment. The voice that rang out in their heart had been planted there on the day they were born! Every single warrior of the Snaphorn world, in the moment of their birth, was prepared for welcome the Queen Mother’s Incarnation. In fact, it could be said that the ultimate purpose for them being born was to welcome the Queen Mother’s Incarnation. This was the absolute most terrifying ability available to the Snaphorn world when fighting against other worlds!

“The Queen Mother.” The millions of horned warriors all raised their heads upwards, their foreheads splitting open as a streak of green light shot upwards from it.

Millions of streaks of light shot into the sky.

For a moment, a large section of the infinite emptiness of the Void had actually transformed into a field of green.

“What’s going on?”

The seven mighty Empyrean Gods stared at this in amazement.

“This...” Ning felt something was off as well. The millions of horned warriors who had been fleeing in panic had suddenly stopped? What were they doing?

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The murmurs of the millions of horned warriors could be heard everywhere. Underneath the green light, their bodies began to dissolve, as though they were providing nourishment for the green light. The green light grew even brighter, and just like that...

The millions of horned warriors all completely vanished, leaving behind nothing within the Void save that enormous green glow. Within the green light, countless murmurs could still be heard, the murmurs of the horned warriors...

“Queen Mother.” “Queen Mother.” “Queen Mother.”

This was their most glorious moment.

Their murmurs were filled with pride and veneration. They willingly sacrificed everything for their Queen Mother and welcomed her Incarnation...and so they died.

Whoosh...

The awe-inspiringly enormous green glow in space split apart into three parts. The light of these three enormous green glows began to condense, transforming into three utterly enormous warriors with jade-green armor, curved blood-red horns, and an appearance that was extremely close to that of an ordinary Snaphorn warrior’s. However...their bodies were like mountain ranges in size, and their auras were completely different. Their auras were of chaos and utter savagery.

As the three titanic warriors took form...the seven Empyrean Gods had a bad feeling.

“Attack. Join forces to kill the closest one,” Empyrean God Redsnow ordered.

“Alright.”

“Let’s go.”

The millions of horned warriors had been quite scattered, as some had fled very far away by now. Thus, there was nearly a million kilometers of distance between each of the three enormous horned warriors; the seven had more than enough time to defeat them one by one.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

Seven streaks of light charged towards the closest titan warrior.

“Fiendgods of the Three Realms...you seven Empyrean Gods, you actually dare to challenge ME?” The titanic warrior let out a loud laugh, a laugh which caused the Void itself to shudder. This was the Incarnation of the first Queen Mother; it could be considered her clone or avatar! There was an enormous price that had to be paid for the creation of this sort of clone, a price of many hundreds of thousands of horned warriors. In addition, this clone could only be maintained for a short period of time. The Queen Mothers rarely chose this option.

And yet...though the price was high, the combat power was utterly astonishing.

“Die.” The first Queen Mother raised her four arms high. The arms were as thick as the pillars that supported the heavens, and she slammed them down towards the seven mighty Empyrean Gods.

“WAAAAGH!”

An ear-splitting scream suddenly assaulted the first Queen Mother. The bald elder of the seven had transformed into a giant, winged black crow. The crow let out an ear-piercing screech, and the first Queen Mother’s clone movements turned slow.

“GO!” The child let out an angry roar, hurling forth the neck-circlet he had been holding. The neck-circlet transformed into a streak of golden light, expanding at an explosive pace until it became thirty thousand meters thick. It coiled itself around the first Queen Mother’s clone, seeking to bind it.

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Battle had instantly exploded.

Ning just watched as the enormous black crow attacked and the child threw out his neck-circlet. Next, a seemingly infinite amount of water and fire descended which was no weaker than Solar Truefire or Lunar Truewater. The fire and the water intermingled as they swirled around the first Queen Mother, completely blocking off Ning’s field of vision, making it so that he could no longer see what was happening.

“Such power.”

“So this is the might of an Empyrean God?” Ning was completely stunned by what he saw.

The Void itself was shaking.

The seven Empyrean Gods continued to battle viciously and savagely with the first Queen Mother’s clone. Although Ning could no longer see the battle clearly with his eyes, the powerful ripples that emanated from this battle were enough to cause any and all Celestial Immortals to perish.

“Seven Planets Empyrean God Formation!” Suddenly, an angry roar rang out. Ning could tell that this was senior Redsnow’s voice.

“Assemble the formation.”

“KILL!”

A hoarse voice, a sinister voice, a crisp voice...several voices called out the word ‘kill’ at the same time.

Rumble...

A streak of blinding light appeared in the field of battle in the distant

space of the Void. The streak of light instantly pierced through this entire region of space, then slowly dimmed. The fire and water had also completely dissipated, allowing Ning to see what was happening.

There were two enormous figures in the distance.

One was the Queen Mother's clone, many tens of thousands of meters tall, with jade-green scales and a savage, brutal aura.

The other was also many tens of thousands of meters tall. He was dressed in rainbow-colored armor, and he wielded a spear that was even taller than him. His appearance looked rather similar to Empyrean God Redsnow.

"Seven Planets Empyrean God Formation?" Ning nodded when he saw this.

This formation was an ancient Fiendgod formation that could only be executed when seven Empyrean Gods were joining forces! It merged the full power of all seven Empyrean Gods together into a single Empyrean God who served as the focus, resulting in an 'Empyrean God of the Seven Planets'. The Seven Planets Empyrean God who wielded the longstaff looked quite similar to Empyrean God Redsnow; clearly, the core of this particular formation was Redsnow, and everything was under his control.

"You are actually able to injure me?" An enormous hole had appeared in the chest of the first Queen Mother's clone. It had been created by an earlier thrust of the spear. The clone let out a loud laugh. "However...this is nothing more than a clone created by my countless children's bodies. It's useless; I have no weaknesses." The hole in the clone's body almost completely healed over.

"Big sister, it seems like we have to help out, eh?"

"These Fiendgods of the Three Realms aren't easy to deal with."

The other two Queen Mother clones were charging over at high speed.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The Empyrean God of the Seven Planets continued to battle wildly against the first Queen Mother's clone. Although the clone was injured, the injury was negligible. By now, the other two clones

had also arrived, and instantly all three began to assault the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets in unison.

“Redhair, what should we do? The clones of these three we are fighting are already so strong; their true bodies are most likely at the Daofather level.”

“The seven of us joined together to transform into the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets, but we still aren’t able to kill even their clones; in fact, we aren’t even able to hold the upper hand.”

“This is trouble.”

“I’ve never encountered this sort of enemy before.”

The seven Empyrean Gods felt uneasy as well, because they were inexperienced in that they had never encountered foes like this before. Although these foes had appeared in that great, calamitous war all those eons ago, the seven of them had been sent off by Daoist Threelives well in advance, and so they didn’t participate in that war at all. Naturally, this meant that they had no experience in that regard.

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The three Queen Mother clones jointly assaulted the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets, which used its longspear in unfathomably profound ways to defend. In fact, within the surrounding voice, countless white snowflakes actually began to appear, and even time itself began to grow disordered. Within this region of fractured time, the spear-arts of the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets grew even more terrifyingly powerful as they completely blocked the assaults of the three Queen Mother clones.

“Where did this fellow come from?”

“He’s merely an Empyrean God! Although there are seven of them fighting together...the three of us, joined forces, are unable to kill him?”

“It seems we need to summon even more warriors.”

“Have the Second Army of the border armies come as well.”

The three Queen Mothers were growing frantic as well.

Although their three clones held the upper hand, their advantage wasn't that huge. In addition, the defensive power of that spear was simply too great; although they were able to suppress their foe, they weren't able to actually injure him. In fact, it was the first Queen Mother who had initially sustained some injuries!

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"We can't kill them."

"This probably isn't even the full power of the Snaphorn world. We can't fight for too long; we have to break out of this grand sealing formation and leave this place immediately."

After battling for a few moments, the seven Empyrean Gods immediately came to this conclusion.

The rainbow-armored Empyrean God of the Seven Planets suddenly lashed forward with his spear, slamming it against the chest of one of the Queen Mother clones, causing the Queen Mother to be knocked backwards by several hundred meters.

Swoosh!

The Empyrean God of the Seven Planets sought to fly away!

"Fleeing?" One of the other Queen Mother clones stretched out her four arms, transforming them into countless streaks of formless green light that instantly wrapped around the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets, preventing them from taking even a single step further.

"Hahaha, you seven Empyrean Gods, you've already arrived at our Snaphorn world's territory...if we were to let you flee, just like that, how would I, Woeslay, have any face left in the Primordial Ruinworld?" The first Queen Mother clone, which had just trapped the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets, let out a loud laugh.

The two other Queen Mother clones came over to attack as well.

"Hmph."

The Empyrean God of the Seven Planets spun its spear about to defend. Although it was surrounded by green light, the green light would at most make it slower; it was still more than capable of continuing to defend itself.

“Redhair, these three old bastards of the Snaphorn world are clearly trying to buy time. I trust that they are summoning even more forces from their Snaphorn world so as to deal with us.”

“We can’t waste any more time.”

“We have to leave.”

.....

Not just the seven Empyrean Gods; even Ning could tell that these three Queen Mother clones of the Snaphorn world were intentionally trying to delay and buy time. They all knew what was going on...but they were helpless to stop it! The Empyrean God of the Seven Planets was capable of protecting itself, but not of escaping. Ning, in turn, was completely unqualified to participate in a battle of this level.

“Senior bear, where did these seven seniors come from? They are in a dangerous situation right now; do you have any method for saving them?” Ning was frantic; his Primaltwin was currently querying the giant yellow bear, but all the bear did was sigh. What could he possibly do?

But just as Ning was panicking and as the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets was battling against the three Queen Mother clones...

Whoooooosh.

In the distant Void, a grayish-white vortex suddenly appeared, causing Ning to turn his head to look at it. The battling Empyrean Gods and the three Queen Mother clones also couldn’t help but notice the grayish-white vortex which had suddenly appeared.

A figure suddenly emerged from the grayish-white vortex of the Void.

It was an old man with a pristine white beard who was dressed in loose Daoist robes.

“MASTER!” Ning stared, wide-eyed.

Chapter 22: Subhuti

“Who are you?” The three Queen Mother clones all called out in unison. Looks of vigilance were in their eyes. The way in which the old man dressed in Daoist robes had appeared was simply too frightening! It must be understood that most people would use special methods to tear through space to teleport, but this old man had formed a spatial vortex instead, creating a corridor for himself to easily pass through.

There had been nothing flashy at all about it...this was something which the three Queen Mothers wouldn't be able to do, no matter how hard they tried.

The Empyrean God of the Seven Planets looked towards the old man, but in its eyes was a look of wild joy.

“Subhuti came.”

“I knew it. With a disciple as monstrously talented as this, Subhuti HAD to come rescue him.”

“Haha, we're saved!”

Even the calmest of the seven Empyrean Gods, Empyrean God Redsnow, let out a sigh of relief. None of them felt any doubt whatsoever as to whether or not Subhuti was capable of rescuing them. After all...Subhuti stood at the very, very top of the Three Realms, and was the most mysterious of Daofathers. Even Daoist Threelives was quite lacking compared to him!

“This is the territory of our Snaphorn world. We three sisters don't wish to become enemies with you.” The three Queen Mother clones stared fixedly at the old man in the Daoist robes, paying no attention to the Empyrean Gods next to them.

The old man gave them a glance, then said calmly, “Vile creatures!”

Rumble...

When the two words, ‘vile creatures’ came out, an invisible ripple instantly pierced through the surrounding space, almost instantly arriving

at the three Queen Mother clones. In the area where the three Queen Mothers were present, space and time began to twist, curve, and break apart. The three Queen Mother clones let out enraged roars within that field of shattered spacetime, and all the green light from their bodies surged forth, attempting to break out. However...they were completely unable to resist the field of shattered spacetime. Their three mighty clones were completely shattered and destroyed along with the local spacetime itself.

Everything turned silent.

The only ones left in the Void were Patriarch Subhuti, Ji Ning, and the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets.

“But...” Ning couldn’t believe what he had just seen.

“So this is the power of Patriarch Subhuti?” The seven Empyrean Gods were terrified as well. It must be understood that Empyrean God Redsnow stood at the very pinnacle of power amongst Empyrean Gods; in fact, he was extremely close in power to an ordinary Daofather. When the seven of them joined together into their Seven Planets Empyrean God Formation, they could be considered to have just barely reached the Daofather level of power.

Those three Queen Mother clones had been comparable to them in strength...but all that Patriarch Subhuti had done was say the words ‘vile creatures’, and an invisible ripple of power had instantly slaughtered those three clones without damaging the seven Empyrean Gods in the slightest.

An ability like this, finesse like this...they felt utterly amazed.

“Subhuti truly is Subhuti, the most mysterious Daofather of the Three Realms.”

“He really is powerful.”

“Utterly terrifying.”

The seven mighty Empyrean Gods were completely stunned.

Patriarch Subhuti was too mysterious a figure; he rarely showed his power within the Three Realms, and these seven Empyrean Gods had never seen him strike! They had only heard from their former Godking, 'Daoist Threelives', that Patriarch Subhuti was very strong, even stronger than Daoist Threelives himself. As for how much stronger...very few in the Three Realms knew the answer to that question. The number one impression which the countless experts of the Three Realms had of Patriarch Subhuti could be summarized in one word; 'mysterious'!

Just look at the Crescent major world he had created! Without Patriarch Subhuti's permission, nobody could even find it! This ability alone was utterly inconceivable.

.....

In truth, the person who had undergone the greatest emotional turmoil just now was actually Subhuti's disciple, Ji Ning.

He had felt despair upon being trapped, had quietly waited and fought for eighteen years, felt utter despair again upon being captured alive, felt shocked and overjoyed at the appearance of the seven Empyrean Gods, once more felt despair upon seeing how powerful the three Queen Mother clones were...and now, his master had appeared, said the words 'vile creatures', and completely killed all three Queen Mother clones.

In fact...in his heart, Ning felt as though the entire universe had suddenly changed.

The Void remained the Void...but Ning now felt that the Void was a beautiful, beautiful place.

"Respectful greetings to you, Old Patriarch." The Empyrean God of the Seven Planets broke apart into seven Empyrean Gods, all of whom spoke out respectfully.

"Not bad." Patriarch Subhuti lightly nodded.

The seven Empyrean Gods felt a joyful feeling in their hearts.

They understood the true meaning behind Patriarch Subhuti saying the words, 'not bad'. Per Daoist Threelives' orders, if his heir had not reached

the Empyrean God level, the seven of them didn't have to care about whether or not his heir lived or died. However, as Patriarch Subhuti saw it, Ji Ning was his own disciple as well as Threelives'; thus, Subhuti felt quite pleased that the seven of them had chosen to come out and protect Ning.

"Disciple." Patriarch Subhuti looked towards Ning. He took a single step forward, displacing himself through space and appearing before Ning.

"Master." Ning hurriedly called out to him with respect, tears having appeared in his eyes. "Thank you, Master..."

"Hahaha..." Subhuti laughed. "Come. It's time to go back."

"Right." Ning nodded heavily.

"Why haven't the seven of you returned yet?" Subhuti glanced backwards.

The seven Empyrean Gods hurriedly flew over. They first saluted towards Subhuti respectfully, and then they disappeared into nowhere. Clearly, they had returned to the Starseizing Manor...but the 'master' of the manor, Ji Ning, didn't feel a thing. Clearly...he had yet to fully master this Starseizing Manor.

Ning raised his head, giving the infinite Void a final glance.

This Nihilum Zone...

It had proven to be a testing ground for him. In this place, he had first overcome the karmic sinflames, had reached the 'ruler' level in heartforce, had come up with a way to apply heartforce to his sword-fingers, and had mastered a tiny amount of swordforce...

Fortune and disaster often came hand-in-hand.

Whoosh. That spatial vortex once more appeared next to Patriarch Subhuti, looking just like an oceanic whirlpool. Patriarch Subhuti guided Ning into the spatial vortex...and then it all completely disappeared from the Nihilum Zone.

The Primordial Ruinworld. The Snaphorn world.

Within a field of endless darkness.

Three minds were conversing with each other...and their thoughts were full of terror.

“Who was that old man?”

“We’ve never seen him before. We didn’t even see him in that great war, all those years ago.”

“If we had encountered him in that war, we probably would’ve died long ago.”

“By the looks of him, he appears to be one of the humans of the Three Realms. From the fact that he attacked us, we can tell that he should belong to the side of the Three Realms.”

“Logically speaking, it should be impossible to teleport through the space of the Nihilum Zone...but he was able to do it! And in addition, he was able to annihilate our three clones simply through his mastery over spacetime. Abilities like these are utterly inconceivable.”

The three Queen Mothers were all restless and uneasy.

He had been too powerful.

His power had completely eclipsed theirs. In that great war, the three of them had been small-time players; they had only survived due to luck. Any one of the truly powerful figures of that great war could’ve crushed them to death with ease. Clearly, this old man was comparable to one of those truly powerful figures! A supreme power who was capable of impacting the entire course of that war!

“I wonder if that old man of the Three Realms has left or not.”

“I hope he leaves right away.”

“I hope he never comes to our Snaphorn world again.”

The three Queen Mothers conversed hopefully to each other, their courage having been completely shattered by the two words ‘vile creatures’. All they wanted right now was to never encounter that old man again.

“What the...”

“Oh no!”

“He’s here!”

The three Queen Mothers had covered the entire Snaphorn world with their minds long ago. They kept an extremely tight level of control over the world, and so if any powerful figure intruded within it, they would immediately notice.

.....

The Snaphorn world was located at the margins of the infinitely vast Primordial Ruinworld. It was a world in its own right and was extremely vast. There were countless horned warriors who lived in this place....but at this moment, all of them could sense their entire world shaking. The ground itself was trembling, and the mountains were beginning to collapse.

“What is going on?”

“What is this?”

The countless horned warriors raised their heads to stare towards the skies. Some of these Snaphorn citizens were merely youths, not yet qualified to join the army; they had to reach at least the most basic level, the Earth-level, before they could become warriors. At this moment, every single person in the entire world, including the Elders of the Palace of Elders as well as every single army squad were staring at the skies with raised heads.

Rumble...

From beyond the Snaphorn world...a single, utterly gigantic palm had appeared.

This palm was nearly half as large as the entire Snaphorn world itself. When it slapped downwards through the Void of space towards the Snaphorn world...

Crackle, crackle, crackle...

The protective formations covering the Snaphorn world began to crack apart, and even spacetime itself was compressed so tightly that it began to shatter. And the strangest thing was...spacetime within the Snaphorn world began to compress into multiple layers of density, and the layers of spacetime came crashing downwards.

As the palm came slamming down, the layers of spacetime began to split apart.

“No!”

“Flee!”

“FLEE!”

Three utterly enormous creatures had suddenly charged out from deep within the Snaphorn world.

They, too, had incomparably massive bodies with pitch-black scales, but compared to the ordinary horned warriors, they were much, much fatter. At first glance...one would see that their bellies took up nearly half the size of their entire bodies. Their ugly little eyes emitted rays of dark light that attempted to tear a hole through space.

Whoooooosh...

That enormous palm continued to descend, causing spacetime to continue to compress and shatter apart, layer by layer. The spacetime at the very bottom had become incredibly dense, making it so that the three mighty Queen Mothers were completely unable to tear a rift through space and flee, no matter how they tried.

“Spare us.”

“Spare us.”

“Spare us!”

All three Queen Mothers called out loudly, their voices reverberating through the entire Snaphorn world.

But that massive palm continued to coldly, emotionlessly continue its downward smash.

“No...” The countless horned warriors were all completely stunned. They felt terror, a terror that came from their very souls. This was all completely beyond their expectations. That giant palm which they could see with the naked eye...it was a palm of infinite size, a palm that was more than half as large as their entire world itself. Even if Ning were to use his [Torch-Dragon’s Eye], he still would find it hard to see the complete palm.

They could see the massive, canyon-like fingerprints and palm-print of that mighty palm.

BANG! BANG! BANG! An incredible amount of pressure had already been brought down to bear. The countless horned warriors of the Snaphorn world began to explode into green-colored bits of blood and gore. Only a very small number of violet-caped warriors and golden-caped warriors were able to just barely stay alive...but their bodies were also slowly beginning to crack.

“Old bastard...are you trying to start another war?!”

“Damn you, you old bastard!”

“Damn you!”

Asking for mercy was useless. The three Queen Mothers went mad, beginning to curse in utter despair, using every imprecation in the book. They weren’t even able to flee...all they could do was face this terrifying palm as it came down.

BANG! BANG! BANG! The palm had yet to make contact, but the pressured, fractured spacetime that came before it had caused the bodies of even the golden-caped warriors to completely blow apart. The only ones left within the Snaphorn world were those three mighty Queen Mothers. Their hideous bodies began to crack as well. Slowly, the cracks grew larger and larger, and the three Queen Mothers began to curse and scream in an even louder manner.

Finally...it all came to an end.

The three Queen Mothers had been completely blown apart, having

transformed into dust.

BOOM!

The giant palm finally came to a halt.

An ancient voice rang out. “Start another war? Nothing more than three little worms!” And then...the enormous palm completely vanished.

Everything turned silent.

The entire Snaphorn world...had become transformed into a massive planetary basin with a giant, palm-shaped impression caved into it.¹

*

1. To get a sense of what this looks like...take a look at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99yqtxKhOCc>. Start at the 2 minute mark.

Chapter 23: The Return

There were white clouds in the skies. A spatial vortex suddenly appeared within them, followed by an old man in Daoist robes emerging alongside a youth.

Ji Ning looked downwards.

He immediately saw Mount Innerheart...and he was even able to see the many disciples of the Mount Innerheart League, living their peaceful lives there.

“Let’s go.” Subhuti led Ning in flying downwards. They quickly arrived at the most central area of Mount Innerheart – the Tristar Crescent Abode, that seemingly ordinary-looking Daoist monastery. This was the place where Patriarch Subhuti normally trained in; disciples like Ning and the others wouldn’t dare to go disturb him without cause.

Within the Daoist monastery.

Subhuti landed, then took a high seat in the lotus position.

Ning respectfully bowed. “If it hadn’t been for your aid, Master, your disciple would have most likely never been able to return to the Three Realms. Your disciple feels ashamed for having forced you to exert yourself, Master.”

Subhuti laughed. “Sit.”

Ning selected a prayer mat and sat down beneath him.

“How did the karmic sinflames taste?” Subhuti asked.

“I don’t wish to experience them again,” Ning said. “The karmic sinflames are now ever-present around me. Although the burning sensation is agonizing...I can endure it. The descent of the karmic sinflames...although it was a tribulation for me, I gained quite a bit from it.”

“Fortune and calamity ride together,” Subhuti said with a laugh. “What level has your heartforce reached?”

“The third level,” Ning said.

Subhuti nodded and smiled. “I noticed that when you were fighting those aliens, your application of heartforce through your sword-fingers had reached a level where none of it leaked out whatsoever. It seems you’ve also developed an actual technique for applying heartforce through your fingers.”

“I did indeed learn a few things from my eighteen years of battle,” Ning said.

“Do you know why those aliens did not kill you, and instead chose to battle with you for eighteen years?” Subhuti asked.

Ning was startled. He shook his head. “Those aliens said that they were going to use me for target practice to train their warriors, but...I keep on having the feeling that this was perhaps not the actual reason.”

Subhuti nodded gently. “Your feelings were correct. You are in control of heartforce, and also know a way to apply it. Heartforce...it is an extremely mysterious type of power, one which even True Gods and Daofathers ponder on. There are five levels of heartforce. Although it is very weak in the early stages, as you go farther along this path and rise in levels, it will undergo an utterly earth-shaking transformation! The third level of heartforce is already quite astonishing. By using your third level heartforce, you have already reached the minimum threshold of an Empyrean God in power.”

Ning understood this to be true.

The first level was fairly weak; the amount of benefit it brought was almost negligible. The second level represented a clear, explosive increase in power...and the third level allowed one’s previous level of power to skyrocketed. The fourth level was the level of the most powerful divine archers of the Three Realms, and as for the fifth level...it was the level of the long-vanished Houyi.

“Heartforce is very powerful. If you can reach the fifth level, then even as a mere Empyrean God, you would have the combat power of a Daofather or a True God.” Subhuti looked at Ning. “The peak power of

heartforce is far greater than your [Starseizing Hand]. You must not be lazy in making use of your talent for heartforce.”

“Your disciple understands.” Ning nodded.

But how could the fifth level of heartforce be so easily accomplished?

The only one who was publicly known within the Three Realms to have reached this level was Houyi. Perhaps some supreme Daofathers or True Gods might have secretly reached this level without telling anyone or using it...but still, one could clearly tell that reaching the fifth level was unbelievably hard.

“The reason why the aliens of the Snaphorn world did not kill you was precisely because the mind and thought-strands of the masters of the Snaphorn world had descended upon the bodies of those warriors. Through battling with you repeatedly, they would be able to sense the ripples of your application of heartforce in detail, and thus be able to develop a heartforce technique,” Subhuti said. “I imagine that the past eighteen years have brought insights to the owner of the Snaphorn world! Heartforce...it is a technique which is unique to our Three Realms. It absolutely cannot be taught to outsiders.”

“They have insights into it? It can’t be taught to outsiders?” Ning was shocked. “I...”

“I’ve already annihilated the entire Snaphorn world, and the masters of the Snaphorn world are dead. Even if they did come up with a bit of information on heartforce, it is of no use now,” Subhuti said.

Ning let out a sigh of relief...and then stared in amazement.

The Snaphorn world had been annihilated?

This entire time, from rescuing him to bringing him back to Mount Innerheart, his master had been by his side. Somehow, without Ning even having the faintest clue about it, he had annihilated the entire Snaphorn world, including even its masters? Ning had been able to tell from the battle between the seven Empyrean Gods and the three Queen Mother clones that the masters of the Snaphorn world had to be very strong.

“My master truly is unfathomable,” Ning secretly mused to himself.

“Right. That Dao-companion of yours, that Yu Wei,” Subhuti said, “She’s already overcome her tribulation and become a Celestial Immortal. Did you know about this?”

“Senior apprentice-sister became a Celestial Immortal?” Ning was both delighted and surprised.

He was surprised because his senior apprentice-sister had actually become a Celestial Immortal before him. Before she had left to go accompany Patriarch Lu, her power as displayed within the Conclave of Immortal Destiny hadn’t been particularly eye-catching. Who would’ve thought that in just a few short decades, she would’ve become a Celestial Immortal, even before Ning himself had?

“When is your Primaltwin going to undergo the Celestial Tribulation?” Subhuti asked. The questions which any master cared the most about were naturally the ones related to the disciple’s tribulation. This was the most difficult calamity for any Immortal cultivator to face.

“Very soon,” Ning said.

“You need to ponder on the application of heartforce to your Immortal swords,” Subhuti said. “Your experiences and background are all quite extraordinary. Even though your Primaltwin is a Ki Refiner...the power of this tribulation will definitely be significant. If you can completely apply your heartforce to your Immortal swords, your power shall be greatly improved. I trust that your chances of overcoming your tribulation shall thus be much greater. The technique you’ve developed during the past eighteen years is for applying heartforce to your sword-fingers. There isn’t a huge difference between your sword-fingers and your swords...I trust you can make it work.”

“Yes.” Ning understood that his master was expressing concern and care for him.

And indeed...his Primaltwin could also use heartforce when executing the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation], at which point his power would rise by a shocking amount. This would indeed give him a much

better chance at overcoming his tribulation.

“Your disciple shall definitely first develop a way to apply heartforce through physical swords before attempting the tribulation,” Ning said.

“As for your true body...ideally, you should only attempt the tribulation to become an Empyrean God after you have completely mastered the Grand Dao of the Sword,” Subhuti added.

“Complete mastery?” Ning was stunned.

Although he was at a very high level in the Dao of the Sword, he was still quite a ways off from completely mastering it. In addition...generally speaking, the closer one was to mastery, the harder it would be to break through the next bottleneck.

“You are capable of wielding swordforce; it can be said that you have already touched upon what the essence of the sword is. You should be completely capable of mastering the Dao of the Sword at the void-level, which will give you a decent chance.” Subhuti looked solemnly at Ning. “I’m not too worried about your Primaltwin’s tribulation. But your true body’s tribulation...you have to be careful, careful, careful!”

Ning felt pressure as well. He nodded lightly. Right...

Upon returning to the Three Realms, Ning’s subconscious premonitions had grown strong once again. Just discussing his true body’s tribulation instantly caused Ning to feel nervousness in his heart. He knew that this was Fate’s way of warning him in secret. The Three Realms occasionally gave birth to truly peerless, monstrous geniuses who were blessed by the distilled virtues of the universe, but the more of a genius one was, the more terrifying one’s Celestial Tribulation would be. If he could overcome it, he would soar to the heavens in a single leap, becoming a mover and shaker of the Three Realms. But...the vast majority would end up perishing to the Celestial Tribulation!

“Little bear!” Subhuti suddenly called out.

Whoosh.

The giant yellow bear suddenly appeared next to Ning. The giant yellow

bear respectfully fell to his knees and said, “This little bear greets you, Daofather.”

“Let the other seven come out,” Subhuti instructed.

“Yes.” The giant yellow bear didn’t dare to disobey.

Ning’s heart clenched. Ning was extremely curious about those seven Empyrean Gods; after all, back in the Wargod Hall of the underwater estate, it had been a clone of Empyrean God Redsnow, formed from a drop of Redsnow’s blood, who had served to test Ning. In addition, when he encountered danger just now, it had been the seven of them who had intervened to rescue him.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Seven figures appeared out of nowhere, all in human form. In truth... they had all changed their appearances; after all, as Fiendgods, their true forms were quite enormous. They all looked quite odd, but Pangu, Nuwa, and many other supreme powers all looked quite humanoid, which was why Fiendgods like to take on the appearance of humans. In fact...in secret, many Fiendgods speculated that the reason why humans had such astonishing potential was because Nuwa had used ‘Pangu’ as the blueprint for creating humanity.

“Greetings to you, Old Patriarch.” All seven Empyrean Gods saluted reverently.

“Thank you, Old Patriarch, for saving our lives.” Empyrean God Redsnow was the first to respectfully offer his thanks.

“Even if I hadn’t gone, you would’ve been able to stay alive,” Subhuti said with a laugh. “You could’ve simply returned to the Starseizing Manor and your own world within it, bringing Ji Ning inside and hiding him within it. In a true battle, you wouldn’t be able to defeat the Snaphorn world, but if you were to rely on the formations protecting your own world, you would’ve been able to withstand them.”

“But the three of them were Daofathers...” Empyrean God Redsnow was amazed. The other six Empyrean Gods were amazed as well.

Returning to the world of Threelives and relying on its formations to resist the foes; this was their final option. However...Daofathers had utterly astonishing levels of power. In addition, there were three of them this time! They didn't believe they had the power to fight back against such a force.

However...given who Patriarch Subhuti was, if he said they could do it, he definitely had a reason for saying so.

"Three Daofathers? You give too much credit to those three little worms." Subhuti shook his head. "Those creatures are not of the Three Realms, and you know nothing at all about them; they simply cannot be judged so easily, just by using the power levels of the Three Realms."

All seven Empyrean Gods were now curious, as was Ji Ning.

"In the Snaphorn world, there were a total of eighteen golden-caped warriors; in your eyes, you viewed them as being eighteen Empyrean Gods, yes?" Patriarch Subhuti explained, "But in reality, all of the horned warriors of that race have a weakness; once the cores in their body are destroyed, they will die."

"Consider the Immortals of our Three Realms. Although their physical bodies are fairly weak, they can control magic treasures at a long distance. There's no need for them to fight in close combat as well. As for the Empyrean Gods and True Gods who do fight in close combat...they have no weaknesses at all," Subhuti said. "These aliens, however, are only capable of close combat, and they all have a weakness; the core."

"As for those three little worms...their true combat power wasn't that formidable. They were merely at the peak of the Empyrean God level. Their strength lies in giving birth; their childbearing abilities are quite astonishing." Subhuti sighed. "During that great, calamitous war...there were more than ten thousand of those little worms. They gave birth to countless warriors, all of whom were able to fuse together into one body...you'd kill one batch and another would come. Under the control of their master, those myriad little worms caused the Three Realms to suffer heavy casualties."

Ning said, stunned, “More than ten thousand? Master...did you just say they have a ‘master’?”

What in the world had happened during that great war?

“These little worms shared a common master,” Subhuti sighed. “A person who was far more powerful than even myself. Only Maiden Nuwa was able to suppress him. Fortunately...that demon has long since perished.”

“Redsnow...you are just one step away from becoming a True God and having a Daofather’s power. Train hard and reach that level as soon as you can.” Subhuti looked towards Empyrean God Redsnow.

“Redsnow understands,” the Empyrean God said respectfully.

“I imagine you and Ning have some things to say to each other.” Subhuti chuckled. “Alright...you can all go back to the world of the Grand Xia now. If you want to chat, go ahead.”

Subhuti waved his hand, and yet another spatial vortex appeared in front of him.

Ning bowed respectfully, as did the seven Empyrean Gods, and then they all entered the spatial vortex. They departed from Mount Innerheart, heading back to the world of the Grand Xia.

Chapter 24: Meeting the Seven Empyrean Gods

Stillwater Commandery. Swallow Mountain. The air above Serpentwing Lake.

The Golden Crow hung high in the sky, illuminating the world. However, the trees below were covered by a layer of thick snow. If one took a deep breath, one would feel the cold, crispness of the air.

Whoosh!

A youth appeared in the sky, staring at the nearby Brightheart Island.

Swish! Swish! Swish!!!

A depressed-looking gray-robed youth, an azure-robed maiden, and a giant, snowy-white dog all suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

“Senior apprentice-brother?” The gray-robed youth, Mu Northson, stared at the distant Ji Ning in disbelief.

“I told you that Master was back, but you didn’t believe it. I’m Master’s spirit-beast; how could my senses be off?” Little Qing charged towards Ning excitedly, transforming into an azure serpent mid-flight, then wrapping herself around Ning’s arm. The little azure serpentine head nuzzled Ning’s arm in a very friendly manner. “Master, I nearly died of worry for you over these recent years. You finally came back.”

Ning’s right hand gently patted the little azure serpent’s head.

“It’s good that you are back.” Uncle White didn’t say much, but his eyes were filled with joy.

“Senior apprentice-brother, it was all my...” Northson stared at Ning.

In truth, over the past eighteen years, Ning had been deeply worried about Northson’s situation. This was because, prior to Ning’s battle with the Youngflame clan, Northson had been tormented for decades, followed by the loss of his Dao-companion. With Ning himself being exiled to a danger zone while covered by karmic sinflames...he was afraid that his

junior apprentice-brother Northson would be filled with self-recrimination. Given his junior apprentice-brother's current state...Ning was worried about what so many years of self-blame would result in.

Fortunately...

Although his junior apprentice-brother had more white hair than he had in the past, he was still alive.

"It isn't your fault. If I have to blame someone, I'd blame myself for being too arrogant and underestimating the Youngflame clan." Ning walked over through the air, gently patting his junior apprentice-brother on the shoulder. "In addition...the feud between myself and the Youngflame clan is a huge one. There's no need for you to shoulder all the blame in such a narcissistic way."

Northson couldn't help but chuckle.

"Master, where have you been? We were worried to death!" Little Qing raised her head, looking towards Ning. Northson and Uncle White looked at him as well.

"That year...I was exiled by the Youngflame clan into a dangerous area in the infinite Void outside of the Three Realms," Ning said. "I was trapped there for the past eighteen years, and was only able to return today."

"So you were were just trapped in a danger zone this entire time. I was worried that you must've been undergoing countless dangers and trials," Little Qing said with a sigh.

"Who else have you spoken to about me?" Ning asked.

Uncle White responded, "We've only informed Immortal Diancai. However, because all of us live here on Brightheart Island, and because Little Qing and Mu Northson found it hard to hide their grief and the worry they felt for you...Autumn Leaf eventually found out as well. Also...your Dao-companion, Yu Wei; when she came back to the world of the Grand Xia, she was already aware of what had happened to you. It should've been her master, Patriarch Lu, who told her."

Ning frowned. In truth, he hadn't wanted Autumn Leaf or Yu Wei to know about this affair; after all, if they had found out, they would've been extremely worried for him.

"Let me go see Autumn Leaf," Ning said.

"Go," Uncle White said. "In recent years, Autumn Leaf will go to your bedroom, your study, and your training room every single day and spend some time there. I can tell that this little girl's mind is completely preoccupied with you."

Ning nodded gently. His eyes began to blaze with torch-light as he glanced towards Brightheart Island...and thus he saw Autumn Leaf.

.....

Within a study.

Autumn Leaf was carefully wiping the table clean with her hands. Actually, because of a formation present, there was no dust on the table whatsoever. However, whenever she touched the table, she couldn't help but think back to those scenes from long ago, when she would grind ink for Ning as he wrote calligraphy within this study.

"Young master, when will you come back?" Autumn Leaf's eyes shimmered with tears. She stared at the chair, the chair which Ning normally sat in.

It had been so long.

She had waited so, so long. Even the young master had disappeared for thirty-plus years last time when he had gone to study the Dao with his master, she hadn't felt the years as keenly as she did this time. After all, last time she knew in her heart that he had gone to study the Dao. This time, however, she knew that her young master was actually in some sort of danger zone which he could die in at any moment. In this sort of an environment, every day felt as long as a year. It had been very hard to endure this.

As a child, she had been sold off as a slave. In the end, she had entered the Ji clan and became a maidservant that was assigned to wait upon Ji

Ning.

Ever since she was young, that tiny little boy had become her everything, her heaven and her earth.

Spring Grass had her father to worry about, but Autumn Leaf had lost her kinsmen long ago. She had only one loved one left...her young master.

She had watched as her young master, that tiny little baby, had grown up step by step. She had followed him in roaming the Eastmount Marsh, had followed him until he had embarked upon the Immortal path and headed to Stillwater City. By then...she no longer had the power to help take care of her young master. If she accompanied him, she would only slow him down. She didn't complain at all; she willingly stayed here at Brightheart Island, quietly awaiting her young master's return.

The days when he returned were her happiest days.

The days when he didn't return, she would wait quietly.

But this time...

Her young master might never again return.

Creaaaak.

Suddenly, the door to the study swung open. Autumn Leaf's body trembled, and she hurriedly turned her head to look.

There was a youth standing in the doorway. He was still dressed in those furs, and he still had that familiar, warm smile on his face. "Elder sister Autumn Leaf!"

"Young master!" Autumn Leaf charged forward excitedly, but when she reached Ning, she hesitated.

Ning, however, reached out to take her into his arms.

Only after hugging for a long, long moment did Autumn Leaf finally calm down.

"Elder sister Autumn Leaf, the snow is beautiful outside. Let's go look at the snow," Ning said. Towards Autumn Leaf...Ning felt very special,

unique feelings. She had taken care of him since he was a child, and they had grown up together. In his heart, Autumn Leaf was family, just like his parents or a true sibling.

His parents had perished. The only family he had left was Autumn Leaf and Uncle White.

Autumn Leaf, in his heart, was his older sister, his most beloved older sister.

Uncle White was a senior, a senior who had always quietly watched out for him.

Ning would be reserved with his affections when he was with other women, but with Autumn Leaf...even if they hugged, it was the hug of siblings. It was a warm, wonderful feeling.

"The snow?" Autumn Leaf nodded repeatedly. "Okay. Let's go look at the snow."

.....

Brighthouse Island was Ning's home. Autumn Leaf had naturally taken wonderful care of it. Brighthouse Island was a beautifully scenic place to begin with; now, with so much snow on the ground, it was a place of truly incredible beauty, the likes of which were rarely seen.

In fact, it wasn't until the sun was starting to go down that Ning finally said, "Elder sister Autumn Leaf, I need to make a trip to Stillwater City. I haven't told my master that I'm back yet, nor have I told my senior apprentice-sister."

"Go." Autumn Leaf smiled. "Your master and your Dao-companion have probably been worried sick about you as well, all these years."

"Right." Only now did Ning ascend into the clouds, flying off into the sky.

Autumn Leaf raised her head, watching as Ning left, a look of satisfaction in her eyes.

Her young master was safe. Even if he wasn't by her side...she still felt

at peace.

.....

The underwater estate. The main palace.

The black-robed Ning looked at the giant yellow bear and the seven Empyrean Gods before him.

“Senior bear, it’s time to tell me some things, yes?” The black-robed Ning said.

“I imagine you must’ve guessed some of it.” The giant bear nodded. “Let me make some introductions first. These seven...are seven Empyrean Gods that had been under the command of my master, Daoist Threelives.”

Seven Empyrean Gods?

Although Ning had suspected it all along, he still couldn’t help but feel stunned upon hearing it. These weren’t like those many warriors of the Snaphorn world, each of whom had obvious weaknesses; these were true Fiendgods, born of Heaven and Earth, each of whom had utterly astonishing power.

“This is Empyrean God Ninefang.” The giant bear pointed towards the bald elder, who cracked his lips in a smile towards Ning. “Young master.”

“Don’t be deceived by this old bastard; he’s the most sinister of us all,” the white-eyebrowed beauty next to him said.

“Did you just call me an ‘old bastard’? What, are you saying you are younger than me?” The bald elder snapped at her.

The giant bear laughed, then pointed at the woman. “This is Empyrean God Snow Scorpion; she’s the straightforward type.”

“Young master.” Snow Scorpion smiled merrily as she looked at Ning. “Hurry up and train hard. Overcome your tribulation, and become an Empyrean God; by then, we’ll be able to accompany you in roaming the universe.”

Next, the giant bear pointed towards the harmless, amiable-looking youth. “This is Empyrean God Dovesnake.”

“Empyrean God Dovesnake?” Ning was amazed.

Dovesnake was a true Godbeast that had been born in the primordial Pangu’s World. He was a truly venomous Godbeast! For such a venomous Godbeast to actually look so gentle in human form...

“And these two...” The giant bear pointed at the two most muscular men, one savage-looking and red-skinned, the other icy-looking and black-skinned. “Long ago, in Pangu’s World, a pair of Fiendgods were born. These Fiendgods were twins that were born at the same time, one from the blazing truefire of the Sun and one from the dark trewater of the Moon. No matter who they fight against, they always fight together. They are known as Empyrean God Sunblaze and Empyrean God Darkmoon.”

“Young master.” Both looked towards Ning.

Ning secretly sighed to himself.

These Fiendgods had been alive since the Primordial Era. Clearly, they were born in the era of Pangu’s World, and they each had extraordinary backgrounds.

“This one,” the giant bear said, pointing at the child wearing a neck-circlet, “Was the first to accompany Master, back in the most early, desolate days of the primordial Pangu’s World. He is Master’s adopted son, and his name is Empyrean God Primelight.”

“Long ago, I wished to learn the [Starseizing Hand] from Father, but alas...I was born as a Void-level Fiendgod; there was no way for me to learn it.” The child laughed as he looked at Ning. “Father’s [Starseizing Hand] finally has an heir. You need to train hard. Become an Empyrean God as soon as you can!”

The giant bear finally pointed at the last man, Redsnow. “You already know Empyrean God Redsnow. He was the most valiant Empyrean God under Master’s command, and the most powerful of them all. Amongst Empyrean Gods and True Immortals...there are few who are stronger than him.”

“I heard Master say earlier that senior Redsnow is just a single step

away from becoming a True God,” Ning said.

“Alas, that step isn’t so easily taken.” Empyrean God Redsnow smiled as he looked at Ning. “However, Ji Ning...last time I saw you, I was worried about whether or not you’d be able to convince everyone to follow you. Don’t be fooled by how courteous they are all behaving; in reality, they are all incredibly proud figures. However, in the Nihilum Zone...you survived karmic sinflames and advanced your heartforce to the third level. You even developed a way to apply heartforce and, despite not reaching mastery in the Dao of the Sword, managed to take control over a sliver of swordforce. Even I have to feel admiration for you. The other six are convinced by you; they are simply waiting for you to become an Empyrean God. You heard it yourself; just now, they all addressed you as ‘young master’.”

Chapter 25: A Promise

“Our young master is a Void-level Fiendgod who is extremely close to the Empyrean God level.” Snow Scorpion let out an emotional sigh. “If the Godking was here and knew that he had a disciple like this...he would probably be very happy.”

“Godking...” Redsnow’s gaze grew distant and dreamy. The others fell silent as well. They were the most loyal followers of Daoist Threelives; if they weren’t, they wouldn’t have waited here silently within the underwater estate despite the passage of countless years.

The black-robed Ning said, puzzled, “Seniors...you said ‘young master’? I don’t really understand. Also...can it be that you’ve been within the underwater estate this entire time, which is why you were able to emerge even when I was in the Nihilum Zone?” Although Ning had been able to guess a bit from their words and knew himself to be Daoist Threelives’ successor, he was still quite mystified about all the rest.

“Let me explain.” A clear voice rang out; it was the child, who looked towards Ning.

“Empyrean God Primelight,” Ning addressed him.

“You can just call me Primelight.” The child laughed, “I know that you have many questions in your heart. Let me explain it all as simply as I can. Father was born a True God of Primordial Chaos, from within the primordial chaos of the universe itself. He was born with tremendous power. After Pangu established the universe, many Fiendgods were born. Fiendgods innately love to fight, and so their wars stretched throughout the entire Primordial World.”

“Supreme powers like Patriarch Subhuti are transcendent. They secluded themselves, rarely taking part in these wars. Father, however, loved to do battle; he naturally collected a large number of Fiendgods into his fold, within the Starseizing Manor. In the primordial Pangu’s World, the Starseizing Manor was quite famous!” The child continued, “The forces held within the Starseizing Manor included many Fiendgods, all of

whom submitted to Father's command. The seven of us also belonged to the Starseizing Manor."

Ning nodded lightly.

"The primordial Pangu's World underwent countless storms and many tribulations, but it passed through all of them safely. But that final war... the war that shattered the primordial world...the war in which Father passed away...was completely different from all the ones that came before." A sharp look was in the child's eyes, a killing look. He was a Fiendgod who had been born of Heaven and Earth...but Threelives, he had been a True God who had been born from the primordial chaos.

This pair of father and son...they were closer to each other than many biological pairs.

For so many years, he had no idea that Threelives had perished...it wasn't until the giant yellow bear had received this information from Patriarch Subhuti that these Empyrean Gods had learned of it. For countless years, he had hoped that he would be able to see his father again, alive and well...but word of his father's death had caused him to feel despair. It had also filled with fiery rage. He wanted to go do battle. He wanted to take revenge! But he realized that for now...he wasn't strong enough yet!

"We aren't sure either what exactly happened during that war; after all, we didn't take part in it. All we know is that Father was firm in his decision to follow Maiden Nuwa, and that he stood by her side in that war," the child said.

"He followed Maiden Nuwa?" Ning quietly memorized this fact.

Nuwa was the number one figure of the entire Three Realms. She had reached Pangu's level!

Could it be that this war was a factional war?

Maiden Nuwa was of one faction...were there other factions? Ning knew very well that sometimes a civil war could be far more savage and deadly than a war against an outside invader.

“Maiden Nuwa was unable to protect us. Father followed her lead, and so prior to that battle, Maiden Nuwa helped us plot a path of retreat,” the child said. “Father expended an enormous amount of effort into this estate-treasure that you’ve acquired. In addition, Maiden Nuwa transferred into and established a wide world within this estate. This world, we refer to as the ‘Starseizer’ major world. This is the place where we live.”

“What? The underwater estate has a major world inside it?!” Ning was stunned.

But although he was stunned...he quickly recovered and understood.

It made sense.

Some of the precious Protocosmic spirit-treasures of the Three Realms innately contained a major world within them! As for treasures that were forged to contain a major world within them...most True Gods or Daofathers weren’t capable of creating them, but Maiden Nuwa was. In fact, she had done created more than one! The major worlds that were contained within magic treasures were generally referred to as ‘caveworlds’.

“We all knew that Father was going to search for a successor; he was unwilling to allow his divine ability, the [Starseizing Hand], be lost,” the child said. “Father was powerful enough to be able to command all the forces of the Starseizing Manor...but would his successor be able to? Nobody could say, and so Father didn’t force all of those Fiendgods to stay here to accompany the next master. Those who were willing to stay could stay; those who were unwilling could leave.”

“Some of the Fiendgods left, but we continued to stay here at the Starseizer world,” the child said.

“We’ve been waiting. Waiting for Father’s successor. Waiting for the new master of our Starseizing Manor.” The child looked at Ning.

The other Empyrean Gods also looked at Ning.

In their hearts...

Ning was the perfect candidate! The best candidate!

Although Ning's blood was pumping, he quickly calmed down. "Can you tell me about the Starseizer major world? Can anyone enter it?"

"No." The nearby Snow Scorpion smiled merrily. "The Starseizer major world was established by Maiden Nuwa, and she was the one to set up the formations around it. Even True Gods or Daofathers would have to resort to brute force to enter it! When we left the Starseizing Manor, we used the formations we controlled to allow us out, but once we left it, we would be unable to locate the Starseizer world again right away; after all, the Starseizer world is inside the Starseizing Manor."

"Who is in control of the formations?" Ning asked.

"Myself, Primelight, and Snow Scorpion," Empyrean God Redsnow said. "Primelight was the first to follow the Godking and the Godking's son; the Godking trusted him! Snow Scorpion and myself, in the past, had followed the Godking in his campaigns throughout the world, and we were two of the most powerful Empyrean Gods under his command; the others would submit to us. Thus, the three of us took control over the formations that protect the entire world."

Ning nodded.

"I know that my master, Daoist Threelives, had ordered that before I became an Empyrean God, there was no need for you to worry about my life, right?" Ning asked.

"Right." Empyrean God Redsnow nodded.

"But...you saved me in the Nihilum Zone," Ning said.

"Even if we didn't save you, the Starseizing Manor would've fallen into the hands of the masters of the Snaphorn world. They probably would've been able to forcibly bind it and discover the Starseizer major world, at which point we would still have to fight them. Since that was the case... the seven of us came out," Redsnow explained. "It wasn't all because of you."

Ning laughed. "But since you've come out...seniors, the Three Realms

are currently on the precipice of a major storm, one which isn't any weaker than the storm which destroyed the Primordial World. Even my master said that he might perish in this storm; that goes without saying for a young fellow like me as well! Thus, to tell the truth...I really need your help. But of course, if you aren't willing to help, that's fine as well."

"The Three Realms truly are in a state of chaos right now," Snow Scorpion sent mentally to the others. "Since we've come out, we might as well follow the young master for now."

"Father's orders remain standing," the child sent back.

"The Godking gave us instructions, but he still left it up to us as to how to carry them out. The Three Realms are quite chaotic; to experience these storms ourselves will be of benefit to us in increasing our power as well," the bald elder sent.

"Big brother Redsnow, I'll follow your lead."

"I will as well."

Sunblaze and Darkmoon both looked towards Redsnow.

All of them turned to look towards Redsnow. Redsnow was their true leader. First of all, he was very strong; secondly, the way in which he handled matters was quite convincing.

Redsnow was silent, pondering as he looked at Ning.

Ning looked back at Redsnow.

"Ji Ning," Empyrean God Redsnow said, "An enormous storm truly is about to sweep the Three Realms. To strictly follow the Godking's orders to the letter is rather unsuitable for present condition. But if we were to follow you...this wouldn't be of the slightest bit of help for you in terms of tempering yourself. I'll give you a promise! Prior to you becoming an Empyrean God, you have one opportunity to ask us to assist you. The seven of us will use all our might to help you out, but...we'll do it just once! Once you use it up, we definitely won't help you again. Even if you die, we'll just simply stand back and watch. If you die, you have only yourself and your own weakness to blame, as well as your poor luck."

The other six Empyrean Gods looked towards Ning as well.

Ning laughed. "Alright. This promise of assistance from the seven of you is enough, seniors! It is like a protective talisman that will save my life; if I still end up dying before becoming an Empyrean God, then I really will have no one else to blame."

"Mm." Empyrean God Redsnow nodded

The child, however, urged Ning, "Ji Ning, hurry up and become an Empyrean God."

"Don't make us wait too long," the beautiful woman added.

"Our Starseizing Manor needs a manor-master." The amiable-looking youth looked towards Ning as well. Their eyes were all filled with hope.

Whoosh!

All seven of them disappeared.

Ning let out a sigh of relief. In truth, he hadn't truly expected that these seven Empyrean Gods would agree to follow him around the entire time; this promise of helping out once was already enough. After all, in dangerous times like this...the invisible pressure from the upcoming storm was causing Ning to feel constant pressure and danger. He naturally wanted to use everything he had available to give himself a better chance at surviving it.

He wanted to stay alive within this storm. Even more than that, he wanted his loved ones and his lover to survive.

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It was dark.

Stillwater City. Within the Black-White College. Yu Wei was currently in her own residence, quietly pondering by herself. A single candle was lit by her side, flickering with light. Yu Wei had a very complicated look in her eyes.

"I need to stop obsessing."

"I'll do what I need to do." Yu Wei walked out of the room by herself, raising her head to stare at theh skies. It was already dark. The crescent moon could vaguely be seen in the darkening sky. She murmured softly, "Junior apprentice-brother, come back...you have to come back..."

Suddenly, Yu Wei felt a strange feeling in her heart.

Whoosh.

She instantly flew into the air like a gust of wind.

There, in the air...

A youth had appeared in the dark skies. He stared at someone far away...the distant Yu Wei. Yu Wei's eyes were filled with surprise and joy. Her eyes couldn't help but to fill with tears. She had a strange premonition just now, which was why she had soared into the skies. It was as though Fate had whispered silently to her soul.

Ning just looked at Yu Wei. The look in her eyes instantly caused Ning to think of his big sister, Autumn Leaf.

Both Yu Wei and Autumn Leaf shared a commonality; they both viewed Ji Ning as the most important person in their lives. For Ji Ning's sake, both of them could even give up their own lives! Ning could sense it from Autumn Leaf...and he could also sense it from Yu Wei. He sensed it all the way back during the Conclave of Immortal Destiny. And now...that feeling was even stronger than before. What Ning didn't realize was that during Yu Wei's demonheart tribulation, she had lived with him for over three thousand years in the illusory demonheart world...

"Senior apprentice-sister." Ning finally called out to her.

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